Re-Imagining the English Country House:
The Impact of Film and Television Representations of the English Country House on the Design, Production and Presentation of the 'Heritage Visitor Experience'

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ABSTRACT

The English Country House is a recognised setting and symbol in film and television, representing a myriad of concepts and nostalgia for the past. This thesis proposes that real country house sites and the English country house on screen are part of a greater *English Country House (ECH) meta-narrative,* wherein all country houses are seen as one archetypal English Country House.

The ECH meta-narrative and its representation are commercially and culturally valuable to producers of screen-media and producers of country house experiences. Utilising both cultural studies and grounded theory research methods, interviews and site visits were undertaken alongside materials analysis to understand the relationship between the ECH on screen and the production of heritage visitor experiences. What emerges is an analysis of both the power relations between the entities and the actions of heritage producers in engaging screen representations in the design, production and presentation of the heritage visitor experience.

The ECH meta-narrative contributes to knowledge a structure of the relationship between the on-screen country house and the real country house. This work contributes to the understanding both practically and theoretically of the management of the production, presentation and design of screen related visitor experiences at country house heritage site.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the people who have supported me over the past six years. Thank you to my husband and my parents for their unwavering emotional support. A special thank you to my sister Molly, for her discussions and help with thinking and analysing clearly.

A special dedication goes posthumously to Dr. Nancy Sheridan who shared her PhD research with me and hired me to work on film and television sets at English country houses, greatly informing this research.

I also have a great appreciation for all of the interviewees who took time to meet with me, especially those who have kept in touch and further informed this PhD over its creation.

All my friends and colleagues who have listened to me talk endlessly about country houses have my infinite gratitude. Lastly, thank you to my supervisors, Professor Mike Robinson and Dr John Carman, for their support.

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CHAPTER 1

RESEARCHING THE ENGLISH COUNTRY HOUSE ON SCREEN AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE DESIGN, PRODUCTION AND PRESENTATION OF HERITAGE EXPERIENCES

1.1 Introduction

This thesis developed from personal experiences as an American seeing the English country house on screen, then visiting country houses when I moved to England. On screen the country house appeared to represent a nostalgic Englishness that my friends and family happily consumed and when the television drama *Downton Abbey* (2010–15) arrived in the USA, everyone I knew wanted to visit a grand country house if they were travelling to England.

I started to ask myself a number of questions centred on why my friends and family had such an emotional connection to the English country house and the way of life it represented. These questions became the guiding framework for my research. I probed into the literature and found there was a distinct gap in understanding how the representation of the English country house on screen impacted on the design, production and presentation of the English country house visitor experience.

This chapter will explore the inspiration and background to the study and highlight the rationale and gap in the literature before delving into the research aims and objectives, outlining the questions I asked to formulate the research. I will then summarise the

parameters of the study and the methodologies and give an overview of the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Inspiration, Background and Rationale to This Study

1.2.1 Inspiration for this Study

I wanted to investigate the relationship and reflexivity between the production of heritage at the historic English country house site and its commercial screen representation. The adoption of the screen imagery of Highclere Castle playing Downton Abbey by tourism agencies and the stream of commercialised heritage products related to *Downton Abbey* was a relatively new phenomenon in 2013 but has since become more widespread in the heritage and tourism industries, as heritage organisations and sites seek commercial viability and value. It became obvious to me that the English Country House (ECH), as a concept, was seen and consumed by my contemporaries through screen imagery and narratives, and with this thesis I sought to define the meanings so intrinsically linked with the English Country House concept. I wanted to understand how the representations of the country house on screen affected the design, production and presentation of the English country house heritage site itself, and its place within the greater commercial and cultural narrative of England as a tourist destination.

Questions arose in my mind about why the English country house held this draw to visitors from the USA, and the answer to this question when posed was quite often '*Downton Abbey*' or '*Pride and Prejudice'*. Being an Anglophile myself and moving to England after my bachelor's degree was completed, I felt placed to explore this connection between the

English country house and the mythological space it occupies in popular culture. Visiting the country houses of England, the art collections, gardens, estates and visitor centres, was my avenue to understanding my adopted country. I observed the relationship between the country house and its visitors as well as the place of the country house in the national conscious and popular culture. The generalisation of the 'country house' inspired the concept of the English Country House meta-narrative, where the ECH is a cultural myth representing ideas and concepts, rather than a specific place. It reaches beyond the factual reality and history of individual country houses and inspired the development of this framework.

The English country house has become associated with meanings and values of popular culture, arguably most commonly through a proliferation of costume heritage dramas utilising country house narratives. The popularity of these heritage dramas has exploded in the years I have been undertaking this research, especially with overseas audiences who consume the nostalgic, if non-factual, English country house. There is an emphasis in the current global cultural climate on the 'soft power', i.e. the cultural power (Portland 2019), of heritage sites and experiences, as well as the important role of the creative industries in making Britain a successful entity on a global scale (Shimko 2019). The country house on screen encompasses both the success of British film and television as well as the draw of British, and specifically English, heritage; country house heritage dramas broadcast representations of England across the world, then foreign audiences consume 'England' and 'country houses' through their fictional representations. Concepts in this thesis are topical in reference to Brexit as the government and tourism agencies utilise this soft power to

increase tourist numbers and spend and signify England's place in a changing global landscape.

1.2.2 Experience and Background

Out of my visits to country houses across the South and Midlands of England came the opportunity for part-time work with a small boutique heritage locations service called Heritage4Media. This company was started by Dr Nancy Sheridan, who felt heritage sites did not have an appropriate understanding of working with filming and television productions and were unable to capitalise on being involved with film and television. Through this job in 2015 and 2016, I was able to work on-set for a number of productions, including high-end television programmes *Poldark* (2015–19) and *Galavant* (2015–16), and speak to film professionals and heritage owners/managers in a casual context within the film and television production parameters, as well as carry out participant observation. I observed how this research was not only interesting academically, filling a gap in the academic catalogue, but could have practical deliverable uses as well, including providing best practice advice for country houses in relation to film and television productions.

As this research progressed, I worked in the field with a number of private country houses and kept engaged with the work of the major country house charities such as the National Trust and Historic Houses. I observed how often heritage sites were engaging with filming productions; when I visited a number of sites early in the research there were few film-related visitor experiences, but a couple of years later there was a proliferation of screen-related interpretation and experiences as well as marketing and media. A good example is

Lacock Abbey. During my first visit, the only reference to Lacock Abbey's appearance on film was a standing banner related to the *Harry Potter* series. On my second visit two years later, a costume exhibition for *The Hollow Crown* (BBC) and a display case presenting filming memorabilia joined the Harry Potter banner. The managers of Lacock Abbey had evidently recognised the power of screen representations to increase the diversity and engagement of their audience. Lacock Abbey's change in attitude to film and television visitor experiences illustrates the direction the country house must move in to be commercially viable in a competitive leisure market (Swarbrooke, 1995) and how it must adopt strategies that engage with fictional narratives and the ECH meta-narrative the public has already consumed. This thesis explores the effects of fictional screen representations on the country house site as the heritage industry moves toward a leisure-based market approach that sees heritage sites valued by visitor numbers and engagement. Within this environment, the choice of the country house to engage with filming and television productions, as well as use their narratives for visitor engagement is prudent.

In the last year of writing up this thesis (2018–19), I had the opportunity to work with the Commercial Heritage Consultancy at Savills to develop a bespoke filming and events locations service for their rural managed properties, wherein I took the knowledge and best practice I learned through this research and delivered a demonstrable outcome for these properties, the majority of which are privately owned country house sites trying to succeed commercially, and all belonging to the scope of the ECH meta-narrative. This experience informed this thesis as I reached the final stages of writing and demonstrates that the theory and analysis included here can always be updated. My place as an American in

England allowed me to look at the relationship between the English country house, its meta-narrative, its representation on screen and the production of the visitor experience from a unique point as an outsider, yet also as someone who was intrigued and impacted by the popular culture displaying the English country house and its narrative.

1.2.3 Rationale to This Study

The English country house plays an important role in the recognised cultural identity of the United Kingdom, and specifically England. Strong associations exist between the English country house, the country house 'landscape' and English identity (Matless, 1998; Higson, 2003; Cardwell 2006). Smith (2009, 34) argued that the country house is iconic of England's national heritage, reinforcing a set of values that are 'conservative, if not reactionary' in 'imagery and symbolism', while Kelsall (1993), Mandler (1996, 1997) and Tinniswood (1998) write extensively on the creation of the country house narrative and its central role in England's self-identification. In the government's publication of the *Report of The Gowers Committee on Houses of Outstanding Historic or Architectural Interest* in 1950 (Mandler 1996), country houses were identified as 'national treasures', holding the nation's archive of art, literature and architecture, and the country house was solidified as an important physical space and presence within the English landscape, both physically and culturally (Mandler, 1996). With the advent of tourist literature utilising mythologies of English heritage stories to sell experiences to both domestic and foreign tourists, the country house plays a central role in making England an exciting and enticing place to visit, holding worth in both 'soft' (cultural) power and commercial power (Olsberg, 2007; Culligan *et al.*, 2014).

From the production of *Barry Lyndon* in 1975 and *Brideshead Revisited* in 1981 to more recent productions, such as the above-mentioned *Downton Abbey* (2010–15), the country house plays an essential role in the narrative of numerous film and television productions, especially the heritage costume drama. These productions seek out historic house locations for their architecture, design and landscape, but most importantly for their physical representation of the ECH meta-narrative; producers then utilise the cultural meaning and mythologies associated with the country house imagery to enhance the storyline and play on audiences' collective memory and ideas. Monk (2011, 2012, 2013) explored the nature of audiences who consume heritage dramas, while many have engaged with the meanings represented on film (Higson, 2003; Chapman, 2005). Along with the visible increase of country houses in costume period drama and fantasy productions in the past decade, the production of nostalgia-chic items created for film consumers to purchase a piece of the film narrative has flourished. Researchers such as de Groot (2009) explored the rise of commercial heritage consumption in popular culture recently, while critics Hewison (1987), Samuel (1994) and Wright (1985) have written extensively on the problematic agenda of commercialised heritage. In addition to the research available on film and television tourism, as has been carried out by Sargent (1998) and Connell (2012), there have been some specific quantitative research projects into film tourism at heritage sites in England (Olsberg SPI, 2015), but this work does not consider the role of the ECH meta-narrative in the film production, or the effect of the screen representation on the design, production and presentation of the visitor heritage experience at the country house site.

This study will build on Sheridan's (2013a) work, which surveyed the economic relationship between income from the creative industries (i.e. filming) and the funding gap faced by heritage sites and organisations such as the National Trust or English Heritage. The thesis goes one step further and seeks to understand how the adoption of screen narratives into the visitor experience by English country houses heritage sites and fictional narratives into commercial heritage products affects the meaning of the English Country House concept and blurs the line between the historical country house site and the country house on screen. It will engage with concepts around how the relationship between the on-screen country house and the real country house impacts the ever-evolving ECH meta-narrative. Crossing the divide between social sciences and humanities, this work utilises cultural studies methods to understand media representations, heritage production and cultural materials as well as qualitative interviews with heritage and heritage-related professionals to understand the reactions of the heritage industry to the place of the country house on screen and the place of the filmic country house on-site.

1.3 Research Questions, Aims and Objectives

Although there is a significant amount of work and research that has been done on film and television tourism and management of film-induced heritage sites, which is discussed in the literature review, this thesis seeks to understand how and why English country houses engage with filming productions; the power dynamics between the real country house site and its management, the screen production and the over-arching popular culture-derived English country house meta-narrative; as well as how the management of the real country

house sites respond in the design, production and presentation of the visitor experience in light of the country house on screen and its commercial value.

The key questions that guided my research were:

- How are English country houses engaged with the production of film and television programmes?
- How is the English country house represented in film and television, and how does this impact the presentation and production of heritage experiences on-site at the country house?
- How do heritage managers respond to participation in film and television and how do they expect audiences to engage with the English country house from film and television?
- What is the commercial and cultural significance of the English country house on screen and what is the impact on the meaning and value of the English country house?
- What role do film tourism and screen-related commercial products play in the relationship between the country house on screen and on-site?

The research specifically examines the commercial and cultural relationship between the film and television representations and the reproduction of these screen narratives and imagery at the heritage site and in commercial heritage products and experiences, and attempts to understand what these heritage visitor experiences mean for the ECH meta-

narrative and what they tell us about how heritage producers present the visitor experience. To achieve this aim, the study has the following objectives:

- To understand the commercial and cultural significance of the English country house on screen
- To understand how and why country house management engage with film and television productions, and what the impact of screen media experiences is on the country house site
- To analyse how film and television productions capitalise on the commercial and cultural significance of the country house site and ECH meta-narrative
- To analyse how heritage managers present and produce screen-related interpretation and visitor experiences
- To understand the role commercial heritage screen products and experiences, as well as tourism promotion, play in cementing the fictional narratives of film and television with the English country house and the ECH meta-narrative and the impact these have on the visitor experience on-site

1.4 Parameters of the Study

This section is a guide to understanding the concepts, organisations, elements and places utilised, and why I made decisions about the parameters of the study.

The references to 'country house' or 'historic house' all refer to houses located outside of a city centre in England, which are historic in architecture and comprise of a main house and landscape. The house may be from any historical period, as long as it is associated with

aristocracy or gentry, has historic landscaped grounds, garden or parklands and is understood by the community as a 'country house'. Often, these houses will be a Listed Building, but not always. Most are open to the public at least some days of the year, while some are hotels or remain entirely privately owned. These houses encompass many architectural styles and have diverse histories, yet I categorise them all into the generic 'country house' because that is both how they are seen and how they see themselves. The concept of all these buildings being one great country house narrative is encompassed by the model of the English Country House (ECH) meta-narrative. As there is not one original country house, the meanings and values of the English Country House are complicated by the hundreds of years of popular culture utilising the imagery and narrative of the country house to illustrate different meanings; these processes have created the ECH meta-narrative. The extremely varied architectural styles from different time periods, geographical locations, cultural, economic or social histories, landscapes and different types of people who built them mean many different physical buildings are a 'country house' and represent the ECH meta-narrative. From castles made comfortable, to Georgian Palladian villas to Victorian Gothic houses, large palaces to modest manors and their corresponding landscapes, the definition of the physical country house is varied, and cannot be collected by one definition.

The concepts of this research could stretch across the British Isles, but due to both financial capacity and keeping a narrow focus to the research, a decision was made to focus on English country houses. English country houses are integral to the narratives of numerous films and television programmes and are adopted as part of the national tourist

organisations' marketing propaganda. For this reason, the country house sites, and the country house narrative described in this research, are focused solely in the English context. It would be very thought-provoking to utilise some of the theoretical findings and frameworks from this thesis and apply them to other geographical, cultural, economic and national contexts such as Scotland, Wales or Ireland. The frameworks I have utilised to understand the relationship between a country's historic house sites and their representation in film and television, as well as the industry created around the commercial and cultural importance of these historic houses, lends itself to the possibility of similar interesting findings in other contexts.

The term 'heritage producers' includes staff and managers at country house heritage sites, owned by English Heritage, the National Trust and private trusts and families as well as individuals from the centralised bodies of organisations like Historic Houses. The term also includes heritage education professionals, individuals from professional bodies who work with both the heritage and media sectors, such as Creative England and Heritage4Media, and tourism organisations such as VisitBritain and the GREAT Britain campaign. Interviews with professionals shed light on the actions and reactions of said professions to the relationship between the media representation and the country house site, and their understanding of their place within the commercial and cultural cycle of meaning and power.

'Heritage visitor engagement' and 'visitor experience' are terms that refer to the on-site experience of the visitor at the country house. 'Heritage interpretation' traditionally refers to the signage, panels and elements of the heritage experience that are physically

interacted with (such as reading panels and booklets or taking guided tours), wherein a professional has taken the history and stories of the historic site and created engagement tools. The 'visitor engagement' or 'visitor experience' is a broader terminology and encompasses everything that happens on a trip to a country house, including commercial events, visiting the giftshop, and the marketing materials consumed beforehand. The film and television imagery and narratives become part of both the heritage interpretation and the visitor experience at the country house site.

1.5 Methodologies

Utilising an inductive approach to the methodology, I prepared a set of interview questions for the producers of heritage at country houses, as well as those who work in the related industries such as tourism organisations, creative organisations and commercial heritage industries (Appendix 1). The interviews and conversations between myself and heritage producers followed this outline of questions (Appendix 2a) but were only the basis for a conversation as each interview took its own shape. Questions were subsequently updated as the interview process uncovered new information, themes and structures emerging from the data, as analysis and fieldwork were happening side by side (Appendix 2b). The grounded theory approach to qualitative data gathering allowed a theory to slowly emerge through the analysis and created the freedom to work with both a cultural studies and social sciences approach to the fieldwork.

The fieldwork methodology utilised observational visits to 17 country house heritage sites, analysing marketing materials before visiting, undertaking guided tours and consuming

visitor experience interpretation materials on-site. A materials-based analysis was commenced to further understand the large output of physical materials associated with the commercial heritage sector and related industries, looking at items produced by the country house management such as social media postings, email newsletters, online stories, marketing materials, newspaper articles and tourism campaigns which utilise the imagery and/or narratives of the country house on screen. In addition, for 18 months of the duration of this thesis, I was working for a company specialising in the protection of heritage sites during commercial filming projects, creating conservation guidelines and advising heritage sites of best practice in this complicated industry. This allowed me the opportunity to be a participant observer, having casual conversations with both film industry professionals and heritage producers, observing the motivations, expectations and reactions of both parties in the relationship, and how advantageous developing a story out of a film or a television series could be for a financially struggling country house site.

1.6 Limitations

Rather than focus on one or two country house heritage locations in England and utilise a case study approach, a decision was taken to visit a number of country house locations; they included those that were privately owned, those owned by large charities or private trusts, as well as those converted to hotels and other commercial offerings. This meant the diversity of individual country houses within the greater narrative of the country house could be explored and a breadth of reactions to screen representation could be analysed. Possible shortcomings to this methodology are found in a lack of in-depth research into one country house site; interviews were held with only one member of staff in most cases and a

visit was made to the properties only once, except in the case of Lacock Abbey. This meant the breadth of knowledge of each site was limited and only understood through one day or one employee. And in some cases, this was not the owner or manager, but the employee in charge of filming and events. Therefore, the interviews, site visits and observation work are not defined as case studies, but as a range of qualitative data which informs the analysis and discussion. This gives a broad approach to the research and provides an overarching analysis of the structures that work in the sector, highlighting the methods of engagement between historic houses, commercial screen productions and the narrative of the country house of popular culture.

Additionally, I deliberately made the choice to exclude audience expectations and audience reactions to visitor experiences. The fieldwork research for this project focused on the impact of screen representations on the production of heritage experiences and the meaning of the English country house, rather than audiences or visitors being interviewed. The audience perspective was employed through literature on film tourism and screen audiences, and often the heritage producers had observed audience behaviours which influenced their choice of action. From the heritage producers, these are assumptions about what their audience wanted or how their audience reacted, and this played an important role in the decision-making of heritage professionals. It is important to note that interviewees rarely based such decisions on evaluation work, but on casual observations.

The audience perspective would provide a fuller picture of the impact of media imagery and narratives on the perceptions and experiences of the English country house by visitors. There are a number of studies that look at film and television tourism and are useful to

understanding heritage or country house sites, including a report commissioned by Creative England on film-induced tourism (Olsberg, 2015). This report did not highlight audience expectations created by the fictionalised ECH meta-narrative or specific film and television representations and how these expectations may impact on a heritage site. In the time since the majority of the research for this thesis was carried out, there have been a number of follow-up research studies similar to the one commissioned by Creative England, including ones looking at the cultural value of film and television to Australia, or the economic value of the film and television sector (Olsberg, 2016), but none that specifically look at the expectations and experiences of film-induced tourists in relation to the heritage visitor experience at the English country house, including the impact of the ECH meta-narrative on viewers and visitors. This would be an appropriate follow-on from this research.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organised into seven chapters. Chapter 1, the current chapter, has outlined the findings of the research work through an introduction, inspiration, background and rationale, then aims and objectives, highlighting the research questions this thesis answers. Chapter 1 also outlines the methodology of the fieldwork. I've introduced the reader to the ECH meta-narrative, which is key to understanding the themes of this paper and how the narrative screen representations and real country house site relate to one another.

Chapter 2 presents an overview of the body of literature relevant to the topics discussed in this thesis. The first section focuses on literature related to mythmaking in a cultural context (Selwyn, 1996; Barthes, 2009), specifically in relation to country house heritage sites and the

attributes of the country house myth, as derived from popular culture. Following this, the second part of the literature review focuses on the frameworks of heritage management practices and unravels the concepts around the commercialisation of heritage and the problematic place it holds for many critics of this commercialisation, such as Wright (1985), Hewison (1987) and de Groot (2009), touching on Samuel's (1994) opposing views, where commercialisation represents a democratisation of heritage. I also present a brief overview of the work done on the history of the country house as a commercial and economic space (Tinniswood, 1999; Mandler, 1997; Kelsall, 1993) and the part the English country house has played in popular culture, and in creating the ECH meta-narrative. Highlighted also is the importance of Smith's (2009) authorised heritage discourse (AHD), and a discussion of heritage management practices in relation to film- and television-related heritage experiences and their commercial nature.

In the second half of Chapter 2, I then explore some of the basic theories of screen representation, mentioning how Englishness and the country house are portrayed on screen. Authors such as Wollen (1991) and Higson (2003) illustrate the interfaces between Englishness, screen representation and the 'heritage costume drama', as this is the type of screen production in which the country house appears most often and which has the most impact on the development of the English country house myth promulgated by popular culture. There is a wealth of written work on the country house in film, and an on-going debate problematising country house costume dramas and nostalgic narratives. Lastly, the literature review focuses on screen tourism, which influences every aspect of the decision-making process for the country house heritage site when producing heritage experiences. It

is also relevant to understanding commercial products and tourism experiences related to the English country house. Some recent work on the reactions of heritage sites to the phenomenon of film tourism is covered in a review of authors such as Connell (2012) and Bakiewicz (2015). This section concludes by looking at Monk's (2012) and others' work on heritage film audiences, as well as some statistical work from UK research bodies. In conclusion, the literature review that comprises Chapter 2 provides an understanding of where I have located my research in the context of what is currently being studied, and where new research can add knowledge to the field.

In Chapter 3 I follow on from the literature review and provide the reader with context for the analysis and discussion, including an overview of the English country house and its popular culture myth, highlighting the main associated concepts and values integral to the mythology and represented on screen by the image of the country house. It explores the history of the real country house, and how this is interwoven into the popular culture mythology through Kelsall's (1997) book on the country house myth of the 'great, good place', as well as Mandler's (1997) and Tinniswood's (1998) histories of the country house in the English context, among others. The historical section helps demonstrate the place of the English country house in different time periods, which is useful in understanding the constantly changing meaning of the country house, rather than the nostalgic view of the country house as a stand-alone and enduring icon of English identity. This section continues by describing how the country house mythology has arisen out of centuries of propaganda and collective memory influenced by those in power. This mythical country house has been disseminated through literature, art, politics, policy, stories, architecture, memorials and

countless other pieces of high and popular culture, as well as personal memories and stories over the centuries, until the English country house has the myth audiences and visitors know and understand today.

The second half of Chapter 3 deals with the economic and political environment in the UK for the making of film and television. This includes tax incentives and the promotion of filming locations, as well as the popularity of the costume drama and the nostalgic longing for the past which illustrate the importance of the English country house as a symbol of this consciousness. Lastly, the chapter goes through the filming process on-site – from attracting a filming production company to the country house, through negotiation to the actual on-set experience – and outlines the impact on the English country house after a film production has left. This gives the reader an understanding of how film and television production works and how the country house is utilised on film, as well as the experiences of management and staff when engaging with commercial screen productions on-site and the effects of the relationship.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodology utilised in this thesis and reflects on the success of the methods. As the nature of this research was complicated, I adopted a mixed-methods approach to the data-gathering, with a focus entirely on qualitative data, as Mason (2002, p. 16) suggests qualitative data is 'indispensable in studying the nature and interplay of heritage values'. Qualitative work is most useful when studying relationships, which is the focus of this thesis. I utilised a constructivist approach, as I was using qualitative data to make sense of a phenomenon I had observed casually; this is important, as a constructivist methodology allows for multiple and relative understandings of the experiences in life.

Interviewing multiple heritage managers and owners as well as working with film and television staffers meant there would be multiple realities presented that were synthesized, analysed and discussed to come to conclusions. As a gentle reminder, Lincoln and Guba (2013) question the ability of humans to be objective, which is a key element to the analysis of the data gathered from interviews, with an approach that draws inference from answers rather than only analysing the stated script.

The process of data-gathering was highly inductive, so methods could be built through continuous analysis. The nature of the questions asked of participants could change based on the specific interview or the history of the country house the heritage producer represented. The observational tasks on-going during my work experience during this research meant many questions were asked casually, and these influenced the development of further data-gathering methods. Importantly, themes began to be coded and identified, then built upon by find matching themes from new data. I utilised two methods for data collection; one is the Cultural Studies Research Method, which comprises methods for studying cultural production, of which film, television, visitor marketing and text, and visitor experiences are all included. Textual analysis is useful in understanding the materials-based productions of the country house heritage site, while a sociological approach allows the researcher to make an in-depth analysis of phenomenon and engage with participants, both of which were key to the success of this research. I also utilised a Grounded Theory methodology, where themes are understood, analysed and coded as they emerge through data collection. And although this research is not a case study, elements of Case Study Research methodology were utilised when making an approach to each country house I

visited. It was useful understanding the specific elements influencing the interviewee of that location. The fieldwork was all based in England (in the Midlands or South of the country for logistical and financial reasons) and was focused on country houses that were interested in speaking with me or to whom I had access through my work on the set of films and television programmes. This chapter also highlights the experiences of fieldwork and important ethical issues in the methodology and gathering of data.

I analyse the findings from the interviews in Chapter 5, highlighting a number of themes that arose through the fieldwork and data collection. I introduce my place as a researcher, which had a significant impact on my fieldwork, findings and on the technique I used to analyse the interviews. I also introduce the framework and theory of the English country house meta-narrative and how it is applied across the analysis of the findings. The ECH meta-narrative is developed from the repetition of the imagery and narrative of the country house with specific themes and concepts through popular culture mediums, specifically film and television. It then applies to all country houses, whether on screen or in person. The ECH meta-narrative also has a bearing on the understanding of the power narratives between the heritage management of the country house site and the screen producers and the representation on film.

This chapter then highlights the motivations of country house managers for engaging with film and television productions, and the importance of a commercial transaction at the heart of the relationship. It illustrates the benefits of the use of historic houses for the screen producers, where producers utilise the commercial and cultural power and value of the imagery of the English country house representation. Fieldwork interviews specifically

shed light on how heritage managers engage with the productions and the further benefits of being in screen productions, such as increased awareness, visitor numbers and spend. The chapter then dissects the power narratives between the heritage management teams and the screen producers. Film and television bring commercial potential and publicity to the country house site, but this income is so essential that the heritage managers have little choice but to engage with film and television production. This could be seen as the heritage managers ceding power to the commercial screen producers over their own brand, image and story, as once the country house image and location is on screen, the fictional narratives they produce reach bigger audiences and are consumed more often than any interpretation or experience produced by the heritage managers themselves.

Lastly, Chapter 5 illustrates the connection between the screen representations – imagery and narrative – of the country house and the real country house site. The success, or failure, of the screen production impacts on the real country house site due to the proximity of the fictional to the real. The success of heritage dramas, such as *Downton Abbey*, also impacts on all English country house sites due to the ECH meta-narrative, which overarches all country houses and makes them interchangeable within the narrative. Therefore, if one period drama is successful and illustrates a country house or country house experience in one way, it will impact all country houses. In reality, the control over the narrative of the English country house is within the forces of popular culture, rather than one screen producer or heritage manager.

Chapter 6 introduces and analyses the actions and reactions of the country house management in designing, producing and presenting the visitor experience in relation to the

country house on screen. Every individual country house becomes associated with its individual imagery on screen as well as the greater ECH meta-narrative on screen. Chapter 6 also touches on popular culture in the heritage canon and popular culture as the medium by which the public engages with history and heritage. It then reintroduces film audiences and film tourism, and the expectations of these visitors as seen from the perspective of the heritage manager. The introduction finishes with the heritage management concepts used for understanding the country visitor experience and its production.

Chapter 6 then investigates how marketing and publicity from different organisations and country houses relate to the representations of country houses on screen, touching on social media, websites and physical marketing literature. Heritage staff utilise screen representations to increase publicity and reach new audiences for the country house site. The chapter then delves into example cases, highlighting the utilisation of the screen narratives and images in on-site interpretation and visitor engagement experiences; this is done through three main examples from the National Trust; an overview of *Downton Abbey* and Highclere Castle and a synopsis of a number of different types of experiences produced by heritage organisations, from movie maps to film retrospectives.

The last section of Chapter 6 examines the commercial products and experiences which relate to the English country house on screen wherein popular culture representation and consumable culture collide. These commercial products and experiences illustrate the immense power of the ECH meta-narrative and its creation from the country house on screen; the narrative is so valuable that it generates commercial products the public will purchase. Examples of these commercial products are *Bond*-themed concert evenings at

Blenheim Palace and *Poldark*-themed beer mugs. The chapter finishes with a section covering how tourism agencies and organisations utilise this ECH meta-narrative to sell England, and Britain, abroad, through imagery from film and television productions. Due to the popularity of film and television, global audiences have consumed this narrative of fictional England, and when tourism organisations utilise images or narratives in their marketing, it encapsulates the confusion between the fictional country house on screen and the real country house of England. Audiences have experienced the country house on screen and now expect to experience the country house they've consumed, mixing their own memories of the fictional narrative with the ECH meta-narrative.

Lastly, Chapter 7 reintroduces the research questions and outlines the framework of the ECH meta-narrative. It summarises the shaping of the ECH meta-narrative in popular culture and the meaning of the ECH meta-narrative. Chapter 7 then highlights the findings from the discussion, stressing the underpinning role of the cultural and commercial value of the country house on screen and the ECH meta-narrative in the relationship between the country house and the screen production. This is followed by an overview of the power narratives between the owners and managers of the English country house site, the screen producers who make the films and television programmes, and the ECH meta-narrative itself. Chapter 7 summarises the design, presentation and production of the screen-induced heritage experience on-site and the relationship between the country house on screen and commercial products and tourism experiences. Lastly, the chapter highlights the implications of these relationships and phenomena, which include the blurring of the fine

line between the real country house site and its history with the fictional country house of the ECH meta-narrative.

Finally, the thesis concludes by highlighting the key findings of this research and suggests opportunities for further study as well as the place of the research in the field. Broader implications of the relationships are discussed, including the place of the country house in the face of Brexit negotiations and the propensity for nostalgic renderings of English nationalism in times of turmoil. The question is posed on conclusion: with the changes to the country on the horizon, what will be the place of the country house?

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced and outlined the thesis. The introduction gave an overview of my argument and my findings, letting the reader understand what this paper will help them discover for themselves. It has outlined the inspiration for the study from my experiences as an American, the background for the decisions made and the rationale for undertaking the project. The research questions are posed, the aims and objectives outlined, helping the reader understand where the research project started, where it went and how it ended. It also highlighted a quick review of the methodology of the fieldwork, then touched on the timeliness of the work and the changes that have occurred since the initiation of the research, such as the growing reliance on the soft cultural power of the UK, tourism, the creative economy and the creative and cultural industries. The theory of the English country house meta-narrative was introduced, and the thesis will seek to illustrate this theory and its framework, as well as use the ECH meta-narrative as a framework to analyse the

relationship between the country house site and its heritage producers, the screen country house and its producers, and the popular culture mythology of the English country house. The role of power, commercial value, cultural value and the need for success in the leisure industry play a role in the adoption of commercial screen narratives into the ECH meta-narrative and the physical, historical country house space. Starting with the literature review, this thesis attempts to illustrate and examine these relationships and phenomena and demonstrate understanding of the impact of the relationship on the heritage visitor experience, the cultural meaning of the English country house and its relationship to the English cultural consciousness and identity.

CHAPTER 2

THE ENGLISH COUNTRY HOUSE ON SCREEN, ITS AUDIENCES AND THE PRODUCTION AND PRESENTATION OF SCREEN-INDUCED HERITAGE EXPERIENCES: A LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the theoretical concepts utilised in understanding and analysing the qualitative data gathered in the fieldwork of this research project. Concepts are relevant to understanding the complex relationship between the country house heritage site and the English country house myth in relation to their use in commercial film and television productions. This review will be varied, covering film studies, mythology and semiotics, heritage management and tourism and audience studies. There are numerous factors at play within this relationship, and a solid theoretical grounding will allow a comprehensive analysis of the data.

The initial part of the literature review will cover understanding the country house in relation to the development of the English country house myth through popular culture. This will give the essential understanding to how the country house narrative myth as it is now understood is an evolution from previous guises, utilising the popular culture mediums of the present day. Outlining the elements of the English country house myth is essential to understanding how it impacts on the meaning of the English country house and the relation to film and television representations and narratives. Mythmaking will be introduced by considering the theories of mythmaking in the cultural and tourism context as presented by authors such as Selwyn (1996) and Barthes (2009). It will then examine the English country

house as a myth itself, illustrating how the different facets of the myth, such as landscape (Matless, 1998), class (Smith, 2006), tradition (de Groot, 2009) and memory (Macdonald 2013), compose the myth of the country house as we understand and consume it today. Understanding the English country house myth will lay the groundwork for an overview of the theory of how film-, television- and media-related products influence the meanings and associations of the English country house narrative myth.

The second part of the literature review will explore heritage, specifically the country house, in the framework of its commercialisation (de Groot, 2009). The commercialisation of heritage is often considered a more recent phenomenon by the academic literature, but in relation to the English country house the concept of commercialisation has a far more complicated history; the country house has existed within a commercial context from its inception (Kelsall, 1993; Mandler, 1997; Tinniswood, 1999). Popular culture is now recognised as a major influencer within the heritage industry, although its influence has long impacted how and why visitors utilise heritage assets. Utilising Smith's (2006) dialogue of the authorised heritage discourse, I will demonstrate the complicated position the English country house inhabits within heritage conversation, engaging with both high and popular culture. Lastly, this section will discuss heritage management practices such as marketing, branding and interpretation and how these concepts play an important role in the commercial nature of managing the country house space as a commodity for consumption by visitors.

Thirdly, the literature review will explore basic theories of screen representation, and how Englishness, the English landscape and country houses are portrayed through visual

mediums. Authors such as Wollen (1991) and Higson (2003) highlight the intricacies of the interaction between film representation and national identity, and specifically the British, or English, identity and heritage. Additionally, it will give an overview of the debate surrounding media representations and film, and the multitude of literature surrounding the country house on film. It will also cover the debate that has been rampant since the early 1980s problematizing heritage costume dramas and nostalgic narratives, which helps illustrate further the situation in which this research had its impetus. The meaning of the country house on screen and how producers utilise the country house within the filmic setting will also be explored.

Although a relatively new field of study, there is a plethora of work on film tourism, and more recently some work on the reactions of heritage sites to the phenomenon of film tourism (Connell, 2012; Bakiewicz, 2015). The final section of this chapter will look first at the audience for heritage film as researched by Monk (2012) and others, then discuss film tourism theories. Practical research undertaken by government bodies and independent organisations will add to this discourse. Although this thesis does not directly address the actions and reactions of film tourists, film tourism theories and methodology influence how country houses engage with film and television representations as well as how they design and produce interpretation and visitor experience methods. Discussion of film tourism will underpin considerations of designing, producing and presenting visitor experience.

2.2 Making Mythology

While the Oxford dictionary defines myth as 'traditional stories of a group of people that explain creation and culture, passed down from generation to generation', it is can also be defined as a 'false story'. The two definitions show the complex and contradictory nature of the word myth and illustrate the problematic process of understanding what myths are and what they mean to national populations. The English country house myth is made up of stories of creation and background repeated and changed over centuries, influenced by popular culture, high culture and the socio-economic and political climates of different periods in history, as well as personal stories and memories of the individuals who experience the country house. Recently, and influentially, the myth of the English country house has been shaped by commercial media such as film and television representations and narratives, which are watched throughout the world.

Barthes (2009) explored a theory of 'new mythology' in a world where individuals are assaulted with images in repetition through print and screen. Through constant repetition and exposure, visual images begin to signify the meanings and connotations they are portraying, thereby creating myths (or stories) in relation to an image or object. Saussure (1983) explored the relationship between the signifier and the signified wherein the signifier is the symbol or object and the signified is the concept the sign represents. Therefore, the sign is the combination of the signifier and the signified, combining the image and the meaning into one. Hall *et al* (2013, p 3) suggest representation is the 'production of the meaning of concepts in our mind…' and this 'link between concepts and language enables us to refer to the 'real' world'. Utilising semiotic concepts such as these, Barthes (2009)

theorised the constant presence of media images reinforced the concepts associated with signs presented by media; once a symbol had been associated with a concept for a prolonged period, the symbol and the concept become one. Barthes' theory illustrates the process by which the English country house image has become associated with a range of concepts and why audiences instinctively understand what is being expressed by the country house imagery on screen. Barthes himself utilises mythmaking through film and television as it is the predominant 'system of communication' in the twentieth, and now twenty-first, century (2009, p. 131). When utilising mythology theory to understand the English country house story myth, it is essential to remember that everyone processes the sign (the message) differently based upon their own memories, education and experiences (Hall, 1973). The 'meaning has to be actively 'read' or 'interpreted'. (Hall, 2013, p. 17) It is also important to outline Baudrillard's (1994) concept of 'hyper-reality', in which the merging of fact and fiction become difficult to distinguish under the influence of new media and technology. The English country house exists within this hyper-reality, wherein the country house and its many representations symbolise both real locations and mythological stories, creating a situation whereby it is difficult to distinguish between reality and fiction.

Selwyn (1996) utilises the Levi-Straussian tradition of understanding myths as stories which serve intellectual and emotional functions for making sense of the world. He views the tourist as 'one who chases myths' and understands myth-making in tourism through three strands: the construction of the 'internal world' of the tourist's imagination (1); the influencing by the tourist industry of the societies surrounding the location (2); and the ways in which these myths are challenged and resisted (3) (Selwyn, 1996). Put simply, the

country house myth is mediated through the tourists themselves, those living and working with the country house heritage site, and those who observe and analyse tourism and heritage management at the country house; all three segments contribute to the change and continuation of the country house mythology. Selwyn (1996) also suggests tourists sometimes choose to visit a location solely on the merit of its location myth, and in some cases choose to move to a location based upon a myth. When the myth is then threatened by locals or progress, there is a reaction to save the 'mythical' meaning and situation. McCrone *et al*. (1995) explored the myth of Scotland within the tourist gaze and outlined the importance iconography plays in the development of tourist myths, suggesting that heritage is a carrier of cultural identity and cultural ideals of a nation. The country house myth is a tourist myth, even if the origins of the country house myth do not lie completely within a tourism history; it is the organisations and mediums that mediate the manufacturing of a myth which are most key to its creation and continuation (McCrone *et al.*, 1995).

2.2.1 The English Country House Myth

The English country house myth is an amalgamation of the stories and representations of the country house throughout centuries of change and development, and the influences of social, political and economic eras. Both Kelsall (1993) and Williams (2011) discuss the evolution of the 'inherent' country house in their work, as well as outlining the characteristics and values of the country house and countryside myth through repetition of text and imagery. Each individual country house has a unique history, yet the consumption of the overarching country house myth is facilitated by popular culture and the branding

and marketing practices of the country houses themselves. Smith (2006) suggests the 'authorised' hegemonic reading of heritage sites and their values is never inherent; visitors, writers, journalists and historians imbue the places and their imagery with meaning. There is no inherent cultural meaning or value within a physical building or estate; from the outset, value is created by the users and observers. The country house myth embodies the 'generic' country house of England represented in the media, tourist propaganda and the minds of visitors. Heritage interpreters engage with the generic country house myth and reinterpret it to tell a story visitors may be expecting, and in relevance to this research, film and television productions capitalise on this developed myth to further their narrative storylines.

Applied to the English country house, the role of the storyteller or mythmaker has been taken on by numerous individuals, organisations and mediums. As described by Kelsall (1993), Mandler (1997) and Tinniswood (1998), the creation of myth and meaning for the English country house is both convoluted and complicated, with each new era's social, political and economic influence, i.e. its popular culture, leaving a mark upon the meaning of the country house to English identity. This English country house myth forms the basis for the English country house meta-narrative, a theory which is fleshed out further in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

At its origin, the physical building of the country house was designed to help the viewer-visitor understand associations the owners were trying to portray. The physical architectural styles of the country house, castle or manor, as discussed by Ronnes (2006), were designed to reflect what the viewer should know about the building and those within it during each

differing historical period. Following on from this in-built mythmaking through architectural design, cultural influencers takes up the mantle of mythmaking the English country house. Popular culture – literature, art, newspapers, government propaganda, music, garden design, laws and political movements – has shaped how the country house is understood and consumed over centuries. Most recently, film and television portrayals have been, and continue to be, the main medium by which the meaning of the English country house is shaped.

I. Literature and Media

Literature is a longstanding and key influencer of the myths related to the English country house. In Kelsall's 1993 book on the country house in literature, he traces the origins of the modern country house narrative from poet Ben Jonson and his 'To Penshurst' (1616). This poem extolls the virtue of the old-fashioned (pre-1600s) country house, illustrating how the propensity to wax nostalgic has been a longstanding mode of operation in relation to the country house myth. Kelsall (1993) further suggests key representations of the country house come from Georgian and Regency novels by authors such as Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett and Jane Austen; although the country estates described in these novels are fictional, they mirrored popular public understanding of the country house myth at the time. At the turn of the century, *Country Life* magazine and Christopher Hussey took over eulogising the country house and its architecture on its pages (Tinniswood, 1998).

II. Visual Art

The English country house myth has also been influenced heavily by visual representations. Although this thesis does not address the country house in art specifically, it is important to comprehend the diverse influencers of the country house myth. For example, the artist Richard Wilson (1714–82) depicted rural English landscapes in an idealised fashion, implying the importance of the hand of the owner in shaping the landscape. In interview, Harvey Edgington, head of filming and locations at the National Trust, spoke specifically about the importance of artistic representations for country house owners of the past in presenting their wealth and power to individuals who would never be able to visit the country house in person.

III. Art Collections

Furthermore, the art collections within the historic houses add to the atmosphere of cultural importance and enhance the status as the home of the cultural patrimony of England. These art collections also help country house owners qualify for tax exemptions, the result of which is both positive and negative views by the press and society.

IV. Politics

Political issues have also fashioned the meaning and value of the country house. The Enclosures Acts (1604–1914) and inheritance tax laws have shaped public opinion of country houses, where the country house elite profited and the non-land-owning populations felt a negative impact. The formation of organisations such as the National Trust and the publication of the Gowers Report (1950) posited the country house as the heritage of the nation, Smith's (2006) place of authorised heritage. Political manifestos and new laws,

either sympathetic or in opposition to traditional country house activities, have come and gone, and the press reaction to these policies shapes visual representations in cartoons and articles, and with this consumption the feeling of society to the country house changes.

V. Tourism

Tourist propaganda, marketing materials and interpretation are not new phenomena in influencing visitors to the historic country house and England itself. Tinniswood (1998) explored the history of visiting country houses, estates and manors and illustrated the phenomena has been underway for centuries, beginning with the movement of early upper-middle-class domestic and foreign visitors on grand tours of the art and cultural collections of England. But it became a tourist trade when the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth had to create 'opening times', and when Horace Walpole banned child visitors at Strawberry Hill House in the eighteenth century (Tinniswood, 1998). By the nineteenth century, historical re-enactments were taking place, capturing the appetite for nostalgic imagery and experiences, illustrating a longstanding history of heritage experiences as a leisure activity (Tinniswood, 1998). When royal palaces like Hampton Court were open to the public, heritage tourism was a fully-grown leisure phenomenon and the necessity of competitive marketing began. The ability to visit the country house, whatever the socio-economic status of the visitor, helped broaden the country house myth across the social structures in England and solidified the connection between English cultural identity and the country house, where the origins of Smith's (2009) 'authorised heritage discourse' begin to form. The English country house was the cultural identity of England, and the tourist leisure market supported that concept.

VI. Film and Television

Most recently and most pertinent to this research is the representation of the country house and its landscape in film and television. With streaming services allowing media to be broadcast across the globe, screen media is the current medium by which the historic English country house is consumed, and the narrative myth is shaped. In acknowledgement of the media influence, the mythmaking is also undertaken by the heritage professional on-site, who create, distribute and publicise interpretation of the media representations of the country house to the public (Chronis, 2008). The visitors themselves influence what information is provided through their purchasing power, giving their business only when their experience is positive (Bakiewicz, 2015).

There are a number of key concepts associated with the country house myth which have developed from the abovementioned popular cultural sources.

The Country Estate Landscape

To unpick the country house myth and understand the associated concepts and values, each component of the myth must be examined. The English country house (castle, manor or historic house) resides within a greater landscape which itself is part of the rural mythic identity important to the origination myths of England and Englishness, exemplified by Kelsall's (1993) description of the origination of the myth in Roman mysticism and its connection to the land. Higson (2006) feels all the landscapes of the British Isles serve as identity markers, but the controlled rural landscape of hedgerows and fields is specifically important as it represents England's origin in agriculture, the taming of the land, and the

small villages of the past. In Rayner's (2010) work on English landscape in cinema, he illustrates the importance of the man-made landscape in demonstrating man's power over the unknown wild of nature, making it habitable and comfortable. The landscaped garden, orchard and country park of the country house estate fit into the controlled rural landscape narrative and play an essential role in the mythmaking of the country house. Williams (1973) suggested the raised profile of the English countryside was a reaction to the growth of the city: a direct antithesis to modernisation and a desired return to a nostalgic, docile and idyllic English landscape of the past. The heritage landscape is a symbolic one and the rural English landscape is overflowing with heritage symbols that represent social and cultural values of the past (Selby, 2010).

Matless theorises landscape helps form 'social and subjective identities' wherein landscape is 'subsumed in the question of how it [landscape] works; as a vehicle of social and self-identity, as a site for claiming of a cultural authority, as a generator of profit, as a space for different kinds of living' (1998, p. 12). The country house presides over a landscape created by a certain style of living and a need for profit generation. Presented through nostalgic lenses as a representation of a glorious past, the country house landscape was purposefully created to represent power and control over the land, the profit from the land and the cultural identity of the nation. Bunce (1994) wrote in depth about affection for the countryside in England, suggesting it is either a reflection of fundamental human values or the opposition of modernisation (in reflection of Williams). Matless (1998) describes the change from pragmatic use of landscape into one which needs 'saving' when the landscape and the architecture within it becomes a museum piece of heritage and a representation of

the national cultural past. Matless (1998) also suggests landscape is shaped by need and use at its origin but becomes a narrative when utilised by those in power to represent meaning and value. Landscape plays an important role in mythmaking as it is the base upon which humans live their lives (Harper, 2010). The juxtaposition between the usage-shaped landscape of the past and the suspended post-usage value of the landscape in a heritage property illustrates the development of myth in relation to the English landscape. Historically, there was a connection between the pragmatic use of the landscape and its visual appearance; because there are historical narratives associated with the English country house landscape, there is scope to turn narratives into myths through repetition in popular culture (Harper & Ray, 2010). The countryside, as representative of the English landscape created by enclosures and gentrification that came with the spread of landed estates of the aristocracy, represents a hierarchical structure which is linked to the quintessentially English ideals of the domesticated landscape and has become a nostalgic symbol of English (white, upper-class, wealthy) identity (Bunce, 1994).

Today, the English countryside is picturesque and attractive, easily marketable and an essential influence in the on-going fascination with the English country house as a myth and an attraction (Bunce, 1994). Within books, and now films and television programmes, the landscape setting plays a significant role in the narrative; one could almost describe the landscape as a character within itself, for the important role it plays in screen narratives. The classic shot of the country house within its landscape sets the tone for television programmes and films. The country house cannot be separated from its landscape.

Class and the Country House

Smith (2009) delves into the phenomenon of country house tourism and attributes the performance of visiting directly to an act of performing middle-class identity. She theorises the performance of visiting the country house and choosing to identify with its perceived cultural and social value helps to legitimise the visitors' middle-class status. Theorising that authorised heritage discourse (AHD) in England cannot be separated from class, Smith posits the AHD and class deference inherent in the presentation of the country house influences how the country house is interpreted for and by its visitors. Country house visitors 'amble around the grounds and the house, view the artwork, artefact and curio collections … while "reading the inherent meaning of the house' (Smith, 2009, p. 38).

The good, grand and monumental commemorations of the elite, such as the country house, have traditionally been the 'legitimate emblem of heritage' in the English context; Smith hypothesises 'what makes a place, building or artefact "heritage" is the symbolic role it is given within and throughout the process of remembering and commemoration' (2009, p. 35). In relation to the country house, Smith's analysis explains that the country house is managed and conserved in order to represent the social values of those in power, such as the National Trust, and is performed through the act of presentation and consumption. For Smith (2009), some heritage is legitimised in the authorised heritage discourse, while other heritage is de-legitimised and unaccepted. Understanding the intended meaning is perceived to be only available to those with the cultural education to be able to read the collection, giving the modern heritage country house a class-stratification purpose. Due to what Smith (2009) calls 'presumed authenticity' of the country house heritage site, the cultural meanings it projects are taken for fact. She suggests 'community and personal

identity are also constructed by visitors at these houses although a sense of community or a sense of place constructed here centres on membership of a certain sense or understanding of what it means to be "English middle-class"' (Smith, 2009, p. 38).

Through surveys and interviews with visitors, Smith (2009) found evidence of feelings of awe and humility as well as reactionary expressions to the modern world which suggest a nostalgic yearning for the time of aristocratic deference. Paxman (1999) agrees, arguing that visiting a National Trust country house heritage site has dual meaning: the triumph of the common people in accessing the world of the aristocracy in an act of democratisation, but at the same time symbolising an acceptance of the feudalism represented by these sites. The country house was built as a monument to wealth, power and privilege and as a physical manifestation of the rule of the aristocracy, so it follows that the country house of today still represents this power and wealth, and Smith (2009, p. 44) posits the act of visiting the country house helps those of the middle or lower classes 'remember their place' within English social hierarchy; although they have the education, means and cultural capital to undertake and understand a visit, they are still not the aristocracy. Even exhibitions on the preservation of the country house are not immune from the association with English class stratification and the mixed reactions country houses can provoke of nostalgic yearning and dislike; on the opening night of the famous exhibition *Destruction of the Country House*, journalists were not welcome for fear of reports of the wealthy drinking champagne while the organisers were asking for charitable money and support to save the country houses of Britain (Adams, 2013). The prevalence of class-related discussion in pieces

of work focusing on the country house signifies the inability to extricate class from any aspect of the county house myth.

Nostalgia, Continuity and Conservative Tradition: Yearning for the Country House Past

A nostalgic longing for tradition is closely linked with the popularity of country house novels, as well as the television programmes and films based upon them. Nostalgia is defined as the 'conceptual opposite of progress, against which it is negatively viewed as reactionary, sentimental or melancholic' and a 'defeatist retreat from the present' wherein it becomes 'institutionalised' and the cultural norm becomes a yearning for the past while praising the evils of the present (Pickering & Keightley, 2006, p. 919). The historic country house myth in literature is closely tied to representations of the 'old' or 'ancient' and connotes a 'reverence for antiquity' according to Kelsall (1993, p. 104). He describes hospitality of the country estate as an ancient tradition that is commonly illustrated within prose about English country houses and landscapes. Kelsall lastly highlights the illusion of productive conservatism and traditionalism in the literature and sees these concepts as integral parts of the country house myth (Kelsall, 1993).

To Kelsall, the country house also represents the 'beauty of old things' and the importance of traditional sensibilities in the face of a 'disastrous' modernity (1993, p. 107). The key term in this quotation is 'disastrous'; the popularity of heritage and historical stories often increases when England struggles economically or when its cultural identity is threatened. Kelsall (1993, p. 91) suggests 'the conservative is intrinsic' in these novels and the story represents the 'old', classical and archaic, but his reading can also be viewed as nostalgic,

seeing the past as an improvement on the present, and as the representation of wealth, power and splendour lacking in our contemporary time. When the social, political and economic landscape is problematic and difficult, the country house, heritage and the past rise in popularity.

The need to save the country house illustrates the value of its nostalgic place within the collective memory. Young (2007) discusses the reasons for saving the country house, and the permeation of these reasons into the country house myth. Young (2007) suggests justification for preserving a country house site includes a relationship with an important person in English history, an important historic event, or the creation of a country museum for the impact it may have on the local economy. For Adams (2013), country house preservation is related to 'continuity' and the call to action of saving and preserving buildings that have been standing for hundreds of years. This need to preserve the country house is illustrative of the yearning for the country house of the past; and the identification of the nostalgia and tradition associated with a better time and place reoccurs regularly within the popular cultural mediums. Nostalgia in contemporary culture gains popularity at times of economic hardship, confusion and when national identity and personal identities come into question. It could be argued that the popularity of heritage in commercial media at the current time is a reaction against the globalisation of the twenty-first century and the uncertainty felt within western civilisation. As Cox (2018, p. 414) states, 'the British country house … becomes a timeless rural idyll'.

The Country House Represents 'England'

Smith (2006) developed the term 'authorised heritage discourse' (AHD) for the phenomenon of an accepted hegemonic reading and understanding of heritage sites. She suggests the understanding of monumental heritage locations within the national conscience was developed in the nineteenth century, driven by narratives of legitimacy and dominance for European – in this case English – social and political elites. For Smith (2006, p. 29), the AHD focuses on 'aesthetically pleasing' objects, sites or landscapes that 'generations must care for, protect and revere' and that these monuments 'forge a sense of common identity based on the past'. Smith (2009) states that for many of the participants in her research, the English country house was an iconic emblem of England itself, illustrating how the English country house myth is entangled with national myths of England. Film and television media, consequently, have given the visitor the ability to challenge, or confirm, the hegemonic reading of heritage and perform personal actions within the context of the English country house site. The country house is seen as the repository of the nation's great art and architectural collections, with some collections holding paintings of equal or greater status to those in the National Gallery, which Lees-Milne (1974, p. 12) called a 'unique contribution to the visual arts'. Meanwhile, Young (2007) reminds the reader that visitors utilise the physical country house and these art and architectural collections to imagine their place within the nostalgic reminiscences of history but within the parameters of officially preserved history or the authorised heritage discourse (Smith, 2006).

Mandler introduces his book *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* by saying, 'The stately homes of England, it is now often claimed, are that country's greatest contribution to Western civilization.' (1997, p. 1) This sentence, importantly placed at the start of the book,

exemplifies how ingrained the English country house has become within English national cultural identity. As England has grown more diverse, more 'urban, commercial and democratic', why have these 'islands of aristocratic heritage' and their associated myths and values maintained popularity (Mandler, 1997, p. 1)? The country house is associated with great art and architecture; old, aristocratic, powerful families; the 'managed' and idealised landscape of the country estate; and traditional ways of life; and has therefore been elevated above other English cultural contributions to represent the continuance of Britishness. For Ronnes (2006), the relevance of the past and the nostalgic golden age of English power and culture to British identity, however false the association, illustrates the importance of cultural influences in nationalism. Palmer (1999) argues that heritage tourism is a powerful factor in the construction of national identity and cultural significance; the support for country house visiting as an icon of English heritage experiences means that the myth (and its related tourism activities) solidifies the country house as a part of national cultural identity.

Writing in support of the famous exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum entitled *The Destruction of the Country House,* Adams (2013) illustrates how the association between the V&A and the country house gave credence to the architecture and landscape associated with the aristocracy as representative of English identity. Adams notes the words like 'stewardship' and 'continuity' used by both critics at the time and modern academics to describe how the value of the English country house was being posited by this exhibition. The exhibition also positioned the owners of the country homes as custodians of the cultural patrimony and of the creation of historical narratives (Adams, 2013). For many

English people, the country house and its physical continuity gives a sense of history and established identity, especially within the changing landscape of the modern world. Lees-Milne, the valiant proselytiser of the country house, once said, 'The ravished eyes stir the heart to emotion, for in a sense the historic houses of this country belong to everybody, or at least to everybody who cares about this country and its traditions' (1974, p. 7). Within this quote there are demonstrated the efforts to 'make' heritage of the English country house and position the country house myth within its late twentieth-century version, utilising, or even creating, its cultural significance, however real or imagined, to make a case for preservation and importance. We are meant to understand that if the country house was lost to England, England's continuity and its national character and identity could cease to exist (Adams, 2013). Cultural significance has been placed on the country house by outside influencers looking to cement its position as representative of England. Smith's (2006, p. 116) theorisation of the authorised heritage discourse acknowledges that 'heritage is intimately concerned with the expression, construction and representation of identity' and the efforts of heritage producers to make country house significant to the English national identity aligns with the hegemonic reading of heritage. As Palmer (2005, p. 28) states, 'heritage tourism' – in this case at the country house – 'reminds people of the nation's core traditions through stories of nationhood re- counted at sites of national significance'.

2.3 The Country House and Its Management as a Commodity

2.3.1 The Country House as a Commodity

De Groot (2009) uses the term 'historiocopia' as a moniker to describe how modern audiences engage with history and heritage in contemporary culture. He poses the question, 'Who, then, tells the public what "history" is and what it means?' (2009, p. 1) Heritage is a complex term whose modern use can encompass heritage landscapes, historic buildings, sites and built environments, transportation heritage (boats, trains) and intangible heritage. Heritage sites and experiences must now justify funding and existence through quantifying public engagement and public consumption, and, in most situations, the onus falls on the heritage site to attract visitors and funding. Problematically for all heritage organisations and sites, funding available from government or charitable funding bodies is never enough to undertake the conservation and visitor experience work that is essential; it is necessary to look for alternative sources of funding, and making heritage a consumable commodity for which audiences will pay allows for essential conservation and educational work (Sheridan, 2013a).

Critics such as Hewison (1987), Craig (1991) and Wright (2009) have argued that history and heritage should fall outside the consumer 'leisure market', however the country house has always been commercial. From the original construction by wealthy aristocracy, the country house was intended to be a statement of wealth and political power (Kelsall, 1993; Mandler, 1997; Tinniswood, 1998). In the seventeenth century, landowners spent large sums of money preparing their houses for a visit from the King or Queen, and after the visit, the

house was opened to visitors for a small fee to make back some of the money spent on splendour (Tinniswood, 1998). The building boom of the eighteenth century meant Georgian estate owners could build and rebuild their houses in line with the current fashion or current status as a physical manifestation of their wealth and power (Mandler, 1997). The country house was the ultimate consumer product, one which only the wealthiest and most powerful could afford. The tradition of country house 'visiting' was born out of a desire to demonstrate this wealth and the cultural power of art and curiosity collections. Visitors to the country house were assessed by dress code, mode of transport and calling cards (Mandler, 1997). What these examples serve to convey is that the place of the English country house within the sphere of commodity and commercial power is centuries old. The recent dismissal by critics of heritage as a commercial entity is a modern creation. The country house, it all its variances, is and has always been ultimately a commercially valuable building.

The concept of consumable heritage reached the national conscience in the 1980s, when the government began promoting heritage sites and experiences as signifiers of British culture and tourist destinations suitable for foreign visitors (Monk, 2013). For Sargent, the 'marketing and consumption of Britain's cultural heritage as a tourist attraction' was solidified during this time (2000, p. 301). Monk (2013) notes that this period was one of class riots and political polarisation, illustrating that at times of upheaval the populace often looks to the past for comfort and engages more powerfully with nostalgia. In these types of uncertain times, de Groot suggests consumers are more inclined towards 'vintage, nostalgia-led marketing and retrochic' which 'are key parts of a culture which is saturated

with historical-ness, a constantly evolving set of (economic) relationships to particular pasts as defined in multiple ways' (2009, pp. 210–11). Consumers crave representations of stability, especially in times of upheaval, embodied by heritage-based experiences or physical products instilling positive reassurances of stability through narratives of the past.

Wright (1985) was concerned about the public aptitude for nostalgia, where the past is alluring and safe; a stark contrast to the worrisome and changeable nature of modern life. Furthermore, some critics worry that the economic feature of these relationships allows the organisations selling the products to 'sanitise' the heritage narrative for branding or marketing purposes, making it more palatable to an audience willing to spend (Wright, 1985; Hewison, 1987; de Groot, 2009). This popularisation could impact the public's understanding of historical discourse and cultural heritage, with influence dominated by the capitalist need to be financially successful (Wright, 1985). Cook (1996) and Samuel (1994) argue that these concerns about the popularisation of heritage reflect a fear of those who are 'less educated' contributing to the narrative of heritage and history, where historical narratives could become oversimplified through pastiche displays. This democratisation of heritage experience and stories is a threat to an established reading of history and heritage but gives greater significance to individual heritage experiences and memories and allows an egalitarian approach to the heritage offer of England. The hegemonic AHD proposed by Smith (2006) could be described as a 'top-down' reading of heritage propagated by the educated, economically powerful elite. With the advent of the country house in commercially available media and products, the masses are now able to access these stories and bring a democratisation of heritage to popular culture. Goulding (2000) argues for this

democratisation, theorising that 'high' culture becomes popular culture in heritage context through popular mediums, which sets up a series of staged authenticities which give credence to widening the boundaries of what is defined as both 'high' and 'popular' culture. Palmer and Tivers (2019, p. 1) suggest heritage is a 'socially constructed relationship because it is based upon the concerns of those … that choose how the past should be used in the present'. This means there is no reason heritage cannot be broad and egalitarian, constructed by many people with a multiplicity of stories, including narratives considered popular culture.

In relation to the country house in popular culture, Sargent (2000) argues that heritage costume drama productions have played a part in the growth of the commercialisation of the heritage tourism sector, and Higson (2003, p. 70) sees heritage dramas as having a positive influence on the over-simplification of heritage, stating that they contain 'craftsmanship rather than dross, intelligence rather than violence'. In contrast, both Hewison (1987) and Wright (1985) claim that the 'heritage' dramas feature false nostalgic representations of the past. Samuel (1994) hypothesises the reason these types of critics dislike the popularisation of heritage culture and heritage media is a personal, academic or class bias, rather than an impartial analysis. For Higson, heritage films, as popular culture, dovetail 'neatly with the work of heritage bodies like the National Trust and English Heritage' by showcasing the picturesque landscapes and buildings of the country house estate (2003, p. 57). Cox (2018) suggests that 'The "Downton Effect" has also been linked to surging demand for Savile Row suits, bowler hats, butlers, afternoon tea, riding side-saddle,

tiaras, vintage lingerie, luxury wallpaper and interior design, even country houses themselves.'

Stepping into film tourism, Higson (2003) observes the websites, gazetteers and other tourism materials create new costumer experiences that help tourists to follow their favourite screen characters and locations across England. Heritage on screen merely merges into the broader popularisation of heritage culture and what I refer to as its democratisation. Samuel (1994) coined the term 'retrochic' to describe the popularity of the past and the consumer products available that concern the past, which range from antiques to commercial media featuring heritage locations. Samuel (1994) notes that history and heritage are present in many facets of daily life with which the public interacts, often without realising, and that these interactions almost all have a commercial underpinning of some variety.

2.3.2 The Visitor as Consumer

Heritage as a commercial product and experience is part of the leisure industry and therefore must compete with all other leisure activities for the spend and time of the population. Some of the theorists (Lowenthal, 1985; Samuel, 1994; Cook, 1996; de Groot 2009) argue that consumable heritage helps visitors connect with history on a personal level, which means the average person possesses the ability to experience history in their own unique way, democratising the heritage experience.

All heritage experiences have an element of human subjectivity; both the producer of the experience and the consumer bring their own experiences and memories to each heritage

encounter. Individuals relate to the past at sites presented by national heritage bodies or privately owned tourist destinations, in museums, art galleries, by watching historical films, television programmes and documentaries, reading historical novels and historical non-fiction books, undertaking genealogical work, buying and selling antiques, viewing digital archives, seeing historically-themed plays and musicals, costumes, buying and consuming heritage food and gift products, listening to heritage music, watching dance and historical re-enactment as well as interacting digitally with historical computer and video games (de Groot, 2009). This popularisation of heritage takes history out of books and schooling and relates historical narratives and culture to personal stories with which consumers can identify. Film and television, as a populist, commercially available medium, are the means by which the majority of the population consumes narratives of the English country house.

2.3.3 Managing the Country House as a Commodity for Consumption

For a country house, or any cultural heritage tourism site, to be successful, it must develop a level of commodification, as cultural heritage management and tourism are intricately linked (Ashworth, 2009). Hughes and Carlsen (2010) explored the critical success factors for cultural heritage tourism sites, such as the English country house. They illustrated a struggle and tension between the need for the construct of authenticity in heritage and a commercial focus in success; conservationists may view commercialisation of a heritage experience or site as an undermining factor. For many writers, authenticity in the heritage experience is a key point of discussion and disagreement. Alternatively, a commercially successful experience adds legitimacy, specifically for heritage experiences which may represent previously underrepresented histories (Hughes & Carlsen, 2010). Voase (2008)

suggest the ‘new’ tourist fits into two types in the postmodern context: the ‘thoughtful’ consumers and the ‘smart’ consumers, and these distinctions impact on how the visitor consumes the country house heritage space. Hughes and Carlsen (2010) argue the cultural heritage tourist is motivated by nostalgic experiences, and specifically by those which are personally relevant to the tourist. The danger lies in making the heritage experience too commercial, which can alienate tourists with a lack of perceived authenticity (McKercher, Ho & du Cros, 2004).

I. Marketing and Branding

Marketing is the process of creating value for a commodity (i.e. the English country house) and turning that commodity into a brand with specific conceptual associations. I would argue branding is a form of mythmaking, creating repeated associations to imagery. The English country house can be recognised as a brand, when speaking in economic marketing terms. Although many owners and managers were originally loath to market their homes as businesses, the successful example of owners like the Marquess of Bath at Longleat proved the difference marketing could make to a faltering property (Mandler, 1997). Both marketing and branding can be classed as ‘self-representation’, wherein the property and its owners/managers decide when and how to represent the country house property. Self-representation employs concepts of representation, semiotics and mythmaking to the advantage of the individual or organisation making the representation.

Key success factors of managing the country house as a commodity in the cultural heritage experiences include financial planning, market research and marketing. Most country house

heritage sites now develop their offerings utilising the success factors outlined by Hughes and Carlsen (2010): producing marketing and informational materials that are distributed to the public, tourism bodies such Visit England, and travel guides such as *Lonely Planet* or *Rough Guides* which help further the brand offer. Cultural and commercial value both play a role in the marketing of heritage tourism. Marketers for the country house struggle with balancing visitor needs and sensible commercial practices; Boyd (2008) suggests this struggle also addresses the need for perceived authenticity in the heritage experience. Heritage organisations must look beyond the traditional 'P's' of marketing (product, place, promotion, price) and utilise a broader range including programming, partnership and people (Boyd, 2008). For example, the National Trust publishes a range of books about the countryside, rural history and their houses, such as *Great Houses of the National Trust* (Greeves, 2013), which briefly outlines the history of some of the great and famous country houses in the collection. This narrative of country houses is an innovative way for the National Trust to market themselves with help from researchers, who carry a level of perceived 'authenticity' in their work. Narratives in the marketing literature should match the interpretation on-site, creating a cohesive narrative brand, or story, for visitors. Any facts or fiction which do not represent the trusts' preferred narrative will not be a part of the overall branding exercise as posited by Hughes and Carlsen (2010).

II. Interpretation

Interpretation plays a key role in presenting the values and direction of the heritage experience to the visitor (Moscardo & Ballantyne, 2008) and a good on-site experience helps the visitor be more susceptible to the message of the heritage interpreter. Effective

interpretation is organised around themes comfortable and understandable to the visitor and leaves an element of personal choice and independence for the consumer while showcasing multiple perspectives within the framework of the interpretation (Moscardo & Ballantyne, 2008). Visitors have increasing levels of sophistication and want to author the experience in his or her own mind, allowing emotion and personal memory to play a greater role (Voase, 2008), and successful interpretation needs to reflect the changing demographic of the visitor.

Mattsson and Praesto (2005) suggest one of the most important factors for success in interpretation, marketing and branding at the heritage site can be a link with popular culture, such as films and television programmes. A key, but problematic, factor in success was presenting a positive story and experience while glossing over the negative elements of the heritage site (Hughes & Carlsen, 2010). This is something of which the English country house site is guilty. Tourists are essentially 'buying' an experience by paying a fee to enter a heritage site, and often visitors, especially domestic visitors, may not like paying for their heritage experience, especially if it is negative (Shackley, 1999; Voase, 2008). The heritage site must be able to succeed in a difficult climate, wherein individual country house sites and their staff have little influence in politics, economics, socio-cultural factors and, most recently, technological factors (Swarbrooke, 1995). The heritage site, and its interpretation, is only able to influence its 'micro-environment', which includes itself, its suppliers, marketing intermediaries, visitors and competitors. It is within this environment that it must work to be successful (Swarbrooke, 1995).

For heritage interpreters and marketers, there is a struggle with the term 'authenticity', and

the inauthenticity or perceived inauthenticity of heritage locations can be a deterrent to visitors, as well as a concern of heritage scholars. For Boyd (2008), this inauthenticity takes the form of distortion of the real story with fictional narratives, the santisation of history (of which the country house heritage site can be guilty) and the celebration of only the successful history. A democratisation of interpretation allows for flexibility in the marketing and greater commercial, if not arguably cultural, success.

III. Partnership with Tourism Organisations

Partnerships with tourist organisations are key in the success of a heritage site (Fyall, 2008). Tourist boards and other organisations produce representations of the English country house through their marketing literature, which are designed for maximum appeal to tourists. These representations play on the common motifs and meanings developed in the country house narrative and are conducive to creating a sellable product. Image management and image branding are key to the success of cultural heritage sites, and both need to be done strategically (Croy, 2010). Collaborations are a key success factor at the local, national and international level, allowing for collective branding, pooling of limited resources and raising the profiles of all organisations within the collaboration (Fyall, 2008). VisitBritain and the GREAT Britain campaign are two organisations within the English context that market English heritage and country houses on an international scale and create collaborative branding. A disadvantage of collaboration is the loss of control in decision-making by each party, especially the smaller parties (often the heritage site) with less financial and political ability than a large tourism organisation (Fyall, 2008). The country house management teams do not have control over the marketing plans of external

organisations, which can create an incongruous story between self-representation and outside representation. There is also the possibility for mutual distrust or inertia to develop between the different parties, and, depending on the nature of the relationship, scepticism and accusations of inauthenticity to arise from the visitor (Fyall, 2008).

IV. Media Representations and Managing the Country House Site

Film and other media representations are credited as tools to impact the viewers' and visitors' image of a heritage site, and there is an increasing demand by the country house to be 'product-placed' within a media entity (Croy, 2010). Sheridan (2013a) suggests participation in film has the potential for not only increased funds from daily fees for filming, but also increased visitor numbers, awareness and spend, suggesting commercial media should be a key part of a heritage location's strategy. Leotta (2016) suggests the next step in heritage interpretation centres on the smartphone and tablet applications and specifically film- and television-related maps to make the tourist's journey more personal through augmented and virtual reality. This continues the democratisation of heritage interpretation and experience as well as giving the country house heritage site more freedom to create diverse interpretation experiences. Bakiewicz *et al* (2016) argue there has not been enough research into management challenges at heritage visitor attractions and seek to address this. (Bakiewicz (2015) argues the belief that commoditised interpretation diminishes the cultural and historical authenticity of a site is short-sighted, and utilising heritage interpretation in conjunction with film- and television-related narratives facilitates visitors in understanding their perception of history, though it may give the visitor a blend of fictional and historical narratives in one place. Bakiewicz (2015) also argues that film-

induced tourism creates a complicated challenge to heritage managers who must find a balance between media narratives and historical narratives through her specific examples of Rosslyn Chapel and Alnwick Castle. Bakiewicz *et al* (2017) state 'achieving a balance between the historical and fictional content relating to the films, and at the same time meeting visitors' expectations' is a concern for heritage managers.

2.4 Screen Representation and Country House Imagery

2.4.1 Introduction to Screen Representations

'Media fictions' is a term used by Dyer (2002) to describe tropes in media that utilise real social and aesthetic concepts and imagery to create an implication of 'truth' while the reality is far more complicated. Voase (2010) utilises Baudrillard's (1994) discussion of the hyper-real to understand media imagery and its relationship to heritage, positing that the past featured in media is essentially a 'greatest hits' version of reality, and therefore only representative of select memories of the past. As Baudrillard (1994) describes, the world is constantly mediated by images for consumption and these images are not always representations of the real. It is in this fictional state that screen representations exist, yet they inhabit the space of the perceived real. This state of mediatised nostalgic reality allows for proliferation of myths, and the fusion of the myth and real in the mind of consumer. Voase (2010) suggests few have the cultural capital (a concept proposed by Bourdieu in 1979) to understand the liberties taken with the costume or heritage drama on screen, and so the representation of the country house on screen embodies a state between the real and the fictional, sometimes appearing more real than the reality to the consumer.

2.4.2 The 'Heritage' Drama: Home of the Country House on Screen

Screen representations of the English country house are often associated with a specific type of film and television production: the 'heritage', 'costume' or 'period' drama. These 'heritage' dramas, so named by Higson (2003) for their utilisation in setting and narrative of heritage of Britain, most often employ the country house as a setting for the narrative. Many are adaptations of novels by authors such as Austen, Forster and Waugh, while more recent films take the traditional country house narrative and combine it with modern soap-opera style stories (Byrne, 2013). Sumptuous costumes, lavish sets, sweeping landscape shots, emotional music and a distinctive element of nostalgia and 'retrochic' are the hallmarks of a heritage drama. These heritage dramas capitalise on the cultural popularity and significance, and arguably the commercial value, of the country house and landscape myths (Monk, 2013). Notably, country houses and landscapes often also appear in fantasy film and television programmes, and because of the connection between fairy tales and British history, these stories fall somewhere near the heritage drama in terms of the association with the English country house myth. Country houses also appear in modern, horror, science fiction and any number of other genres, but these types of media narratives do not 'stick' to the house as well, as they do not fit into the English country house myth so do not become part of the country house brand.

Monk (2012) gives an overview of the history of heritage dramas, specifically in the British context. From the 1930s, 'Britishness' as a sellable concept has been associated with the heritage-style film which Monk (2012) exemplified in those such as *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933) and *That Hamilton Woman* (1941). The Gainsborough films of the mid twentieth

century continued the connection between the country house and heritage films, with what Richards (1997, p. 20) coined the plot devices of 'gypsies, a family curse and a disputed aristocratic estate', where the myth of the country house gained a greater audience. Richards (1997) argues that the BBC itself saw the importance of utilising film as propaganda for advancing British ideals and exporting British heritage and national identity.

Monk (2013) sets the revival of the heritage film in 1981 with the famous television production of *Brideshead Revisited.* De Groot's opinion is that *Brideshead Revisited* (1981) exemplifies the conventions that are associated with the 'heritage' drama films from the 1980s to the present: 'prestigious acting names, music, sumptuous historical recreations, excessive costumes and a characteristic note of nostalgia' (2009, p. 212). Heritage films reached wider audiences, especially North American ones, through co-productions with the public broadcasting stations in the USA on Masterpiece Theatre (Monk, 2012). The popularity of heritage dramas, and the country house in film, shows no signs of abating, with famous productions such as *Downton Abbey* (2010–16), *Poldark* (2015–19) and numerous films continuing to be made by both British and international production companies.

Most heritage dramas are adaptations of novels or remakes of previous television programmes, and those that are newly written, such as Julian Fellowes' works, follow similar storylines to traditional country house novels. Higson (2003) suggests the heritage dramas which are most successful focus on intimate inter-personal relationships between characters of the middle and upper classes. These relationships outline identity politics, social problems and class contexts within the time periods. The aura of nostalgia is present

in almost all heritage media pieces, so many become synonymous with 'Englishness'. Higson suggests, moreover, that they extol the sense of 'there will always be England' (2009, p. 16). Heritage dramas also tend to rely on the rural landscape and country estate for a setting, echoing Williams' (2011) and Matless' (1998) works on the importance of the rural landscape in English identity. For Byrne (2013), the modern heritage drama relies on modern ways of thinking and interacting, similar to a modern soap opera, but replacing the contemporary scene with historical costumes, settings and ways of speaking. De Groot (2009) compares the 'heritage' dramas to other traditional British products such as whisky or classic British cars. He suggests the marketing of the 'heritage' drama become 'part of a worldwide strategy to sell a particular type of "British", classic product', the cultural export described by the British Film Institute (de Groot, 2009, p. 185).

2.4.3 The Heritage Drama Debate and Critical Reception

Arguably, the heritage debate itself influences the way in which heritage dramas are consumed, and therefore how producers and consumers of the country house interact with these sites. Monk (2011) suggests some of the people she interviewed regarding heritage dramas were aware of the on-going criticism of heritage dramas, and that it influenced their answers to her questions and their self-awareness when interacting with both films and heritage sites. For some respondents, there was a level of guilty pleasure associated with enjoying a costume drama, which is illustrative of a level of self-awareness in regard to the critical heritage debate.

Criticism of the heritage drama is reflective of the criticism of heritage as a commodity discussed earlier in this chapter, and many of the same writers theorised on both topics. Just as the country house myth is often criticised on class grounds, so too is the heritage drama. Wollen (1991), Craig (1991) and Higson (1993), all writing in the early 1990s, dismissed heritage dramas on the fact that they were made for conservative, middle-class audiences, while Hipsky (1994) posits that the critique of heritage dramas is an anxiety about heritage consumerism and the popularisation of commercialised heritage as exemplified in this literature review by Wright (1985) and Hewison (1987). Wollen (1991) and Craig (1991) suggest heritage dramas can never symbolise anything other than a problematic nostalgia for the racist, class-addicted society of the past. Wright feels that 'the national past is capable of finding splendour in old styles of political domination and of making an alluring romance out of atrocious colonial exploitation' and condemns its use for commercial purposes (2009, p. 254). Higson states, 'At the level of the image, in so many costume dramas and period films, an exclusive, elite, English vision of national heritage is displayed is all its well-tended finery' (2003, p. 77). For de Groot (2009), this 'well-tended finery' symbolises to the viewer that life was better in the old days. Higson (2003) suggests the very reason for the popularity of the heritage drama is this nostalgic element, and it can be interpreted as a sign of viewers embracing history, heritage and historic narratives where the imagery, rather than the narrative, provides the 'alluring spectacle of iconographic stability, permanence, and grandeur, delivering an impression of an unchanging, traditional and always delightful and desirable England' (Higson, 2003, p. 78). Utilising the recent global phenomenon *Downton Abbey* (2010–15), Cox (2018, p. 414) suggests heritage critics feel the programme is 'a reassuring, nostalgic tonic that soothes popular anxieties during a time

of global upheaval and change'. De Groot (2009) interprets this debate as entirely influenced by the writers' personal beliefs, not from impartial analysis.

The concept of authenticity plays a role in the debate about the heritage costume drama and the place of the country house within it. Jameson (1984) worried that heritage dramas allowed the public to consume a pastiche, not an authentic view of history, and Monk's (2012) respondents were very concerned with the perceived authenticity of heritage films. Craig (1991) suggested viewers were not only consuming historic narratives, but a fantasy of the national past controlled by the hegemonic authorised heritage discourse and the commercial goals of the production company, while Higson (2003) suggests a problem with the use of illusion in both heritage and fantasy dramas to make the audience believe the story is real. Byrne (2013) argues that recent heritage dramas are post-modern and that it is impossible for anything created in contemporary ways to have authenticity regarding a historic period, as they are designed for a post-modern consumer. I would suggest the debate on heritage films is overwrought and should be understood in the context of the political climate and views of the critics. For the consumer, the heritage drama can be summed up by Cook's statement: 'It's only a story – enjoy it!' (1996, p. 7)

2.4.4 The Country House on Screen

Mandler (1997, p. 414) argues the country house has come to represent 'a way of life that has hardly changed' and posits it holds a central place in modern British consciousness. On screen, the country house and landscape represent the concepts and values which have come to be associated with the country house myth. Although not every heritage drama

centres on a country house and landscape, most utilise the themes of the country house and the country house myth to help tell the story. *Brideshead Revisited (1981),* Mandler suggests, succeeded in 'triggering an avalanche of costume dramas in which the country house was the focus of attention rather than simply the backdrop' (1997, p. 412).

The place of the country house within the filmic space is explored by Meinig (1979), who believes it is impossible for the viewer to follow the narrative *and* observe the landscape. The viewer must choose between the 'film spectacle' and understanding and following the story. This observation explains the long scene-setting shots in heritage dramas, wherein the country house and estate is viewed prominently, set to emotional music, making the viewer stop, look and, consciously or unconsciously, understand how the producers are trying to utilise the country house myth (Meinig, 1979). Media productions often use the country house itself as a plot point, which illustrates the importance of the country house myth in the narrative of the story. The prominence of the country house within heritage media dramas means the concepts de Groot (2009) and others outlined as associated with the heritage drama – such as English quaintness, the bucolic countryside, and the nostalgic fetishising of the past – become associated with the country house itself. The association of music with the country house helps the filmic representation fully express mental and emotional concepts of the time period and place (Lefebvre, 2006). Just as class and wealth shaped the physical country house landscape over centuries, the media presentation influences the filmic interpretation of landscape.

Audiences form an attachment to the country house through their experiences with it in media. James (2006) discusses how humans form attachments to a place, especially through

a shared experience; this attachment can also occur through the experience of the film and inspire viewers to become part of the landscape and form a personal connection with it. For James (2006), landscape is an emotional space enhanced by distinctly chosen signifiers presented by the producer to influence the viewer. He posits that landscapes link to identities in film and the use of landscape gives meaning to characters, ultimately giving greater meaning to the viewer. Utilising historical and geographical associations, landscapes, such as the country house estate, are used to create national signs and symbols, useful in establishing representations of national culture. Problematically, due to producers'/writers'/directors' desire to capture a culturally and commercially valuable narrative, the idealised landscape of film often falls short of the truth (Gunning, 2010). Cox (2018, p. 415) argues that the fictions on screen 'depend on strong characters and intriguing storylines, where the emotional connection is created with and between people, rather than between people and objects'. This, he argues, means visitors to the real country house site will have expectations of living history, nurtured by these fictional stories.

British heritage film products like *Downton Abbey* are available globally, broadcasting the nostalgic Englishness to millions. Not only is the programme available to a large audience, Byrne (2013) argues it has created a mass-marketing product of a 'Downton industry', including clothing, bags, books and food. *Downton Abbey* was filmed at Highclere Castle, on the Berkshire/Hampshire border in England, and the house is open to the public. A location like Highclere Castle and its relationship to a highly successful programme is explored in detail in this thesis, highlighting the relationship between the production of heritage and the visual representation of heritage.

2.5 Film Tourism and Audiences

2.5.1 Audiences for Country House Media

The audience that consumes the 'heritage' media is an essential element to understanding how media impacts the country house heritage site. As discussed previously, some critics such as Wright (1985), Hewison (1987), Craig (1991) and Higson (2003) have made observations and posited theories about the audience of the 'heritage' drama, but these commentaries lack analysis from quantitative or qualitative data about what viewers of 'heritage' dramas really think and feel. Monk (2011) suggests many opinions on heritage audiences by critics utilise general knowledge and observation rather than direct research of audiences.

Audience theory and reception theory are both necessary to understanding the audience of the 'heritage' drama; it is essential to perceive how audiences receive film texts. Hall's (1973) encoding/decoding model is useful when analysing media images. Traditional methods of 'screen theory' see the audience as a 'static observer' dominated by the text (the film) (Austin, 2002, p. 11). The implication of this method of screen theory is that the audience has a 'uniformity of response' to the film, but Austin challenges this with new research from the 1980s and 1990s, specifically in the realm of reception studies (2002, p. 12). Reception studies, unlike classic film studies, considers empirical audience research and finds that understanding and comprehending of filmic texts is 'unstable and contingent' upon the social situation of the viewer (Austin, 2002, p. 13). Austin (2002) posits there is a preferred hegemonic reading of the film – the intention of the producers – but

simultaneously the film text will be 'decoded' by the viewer based on their experience and social, economic and educational situation. Bourdieu's (1979) work on 'cultural capital' is relevant to understand how audiences differentiate readings of film and television programmes. Bourdieu (1979) suggests that without the necessary social environment and educational background, many of the cultural references of films and television programmes will be lost to viewers, who may then read the film in an alternate way. Bourdieu's (1979) work is specifically important to consuming heritage films as audiences need to understand the country house myth, with its varied concepts and cultural education. Producers of the heritage costume drama assume the audience will understand the intended meaning of the country house in the film from the image, and do not explain the country house setting in the narrative to an uninitiated audience. Conversely, it can be argued the country house image is so prevalent through media that the myth has become 'inherent' to this image.

In *Heritage Film Audiences* (2012), Monk conducted qualitative and quantitative research with UK audiences and recorded their perceptions and reactions to 'heritage' dramas. She undertook the empirical research because she felt critics generalised the audience reaction to heritage dramas without any research data. For example, Higson (2003, p. 102) speculates that the heritage audience is 'upmarket' and 'significantly older' than mainstream film audiences and makes the claim that a significant number of heritage drama audience members are women. Attempting to connect these statements with data, he utilised findings about Regional Film Theatre audiences, which may or may not have any crossover with heritage film audiences. He also utilises data from art-house cinema

directors with whom he has personal contact, which is questionably not related to heritage dramas (Higson, 2003, p. 103).

Monk (2012) created the 'Heritage Audience Survey' in the 1990s for primary research on heritage drama audiences in the UK. Monk (2012) felt that the major critics in the field neglected audiences and the audiences' relationship to these films and her aims were to gain insight into film audiences' personal pleasures and positions within the heritage film through nuanced responses; understand the complex social and cultural determinants for audiences' views; collaborate education with views (as well as age); and to understanding the awareness heritage drama audiences had with the on-going debate and critique surrounding these productions (2012, p. 177–8). Her participants were gathered from two major groups: *Time Out*'s readership (likely to be cosmopolitan, educated and younger); and people who participated in the National Trust Local Associations and Centres (likely to be conservative, older and rural) (Monk, 2012). This gave the survey and results two distinctive subgroups. What Monk found was that both groups enjoyed heritage films and television programmes but in profoundly differing ways.

The findings from this study help elucidate the market to which the country house reacts when engaging with media narratives in the reproduction of heritage. Monk (2012) found that there is no cohesive audience for heritage films; it is a mass audience made up of multiple niche audiences, such as the *Time Out* readership or the National Trust members. Each cohort proved to have a very different outlook when watching and analysing heritage drama (2012, p. 167). She also found that 'prior identities and orientations … mediate and constrain respondents' relationships with the films' (Monk, 2012, p. 170). Other findings

included the awareness the two distinct cohorts had about the on-going heritage critique; the *Time Out* readers seemed to know and understand the critique and displayed a 'cultural "cringe"' about the heritage drama, filled with self-awareness (2012, p. 175). Alternatively, the National Trust members were either 'unaware or impervious' to the debate, and treated their interest in heritage dramas, and the heritage dramas themselves, in a much more celebratory manner, noting the classic quality of the films (Monk, 2012, p. 175). The results contradict Wollen's (1991) research wherein only 10% of respondents felt heritage dramas 'encourage us to retreat into the past rather than face important issues in the present' (Monk, 2012, p. 176). The responses in Monk's work show that heritage audiences, and therefore potential visitors, are often more aware and comprehending than critics give them credit for.

Many of the viewers of heritage costume dramas would consider themselves fans. Following Monk's 2012 book, she revisited her argument to discuss the heritage drama audiences in the era of global internet. In 'Heritage Film Audiences 2.0' Monk (2011) utilises Jenkins' (original 1992) theories on participatory fan culture and analyses internet chat rooms, blogs and the opportunities they present for 'fans' of heritage dramas to meet, discuss and create fan videos or websites. Jenkins (2013) analysed the participatory culture of audiences and fans, specifically in the era of the internet, discussing the viewers' engagement with television and film productions, ranging from distanced background noise to complete attention paid to the film or television programme, often resulting in a level of 'fandom' (Jenkins, 2013). Jenkins (2013) also found fans of visual productions sometimes 'trespass' into the narrative of the film or programme and reinterpret it to include the fan's personal

views and constructs. To many viewers, the characters, plot and location are 'real' or part of a hyper-reality as posited by Baudrillard (1994). This personal interaction with the film is a resistance of fans to the observations made by Bourdieu (1979) wherein the fans reject having a learned aesthetic distance; the fans want to integrate the visual text into their own social experience (Jenkins, 2013). The culture of fandom is rarely acted upon alone; it is a community of fans and viewers who interact and discuss the programme and therefore give it a life of its own (Jenkins, 2013). For the country house heritage interpreter, these are the individuals most likely to become film tourists and visitors, as outlined in Olsberg SPI's study 'Quantifying Film and Television Tourism in England' (2015).

Monk (2011) describes a new, younger audience for heritage dramas, most of whom have never seen the films in the cinema but consume media on the web, where they react and engage with it. Many of these fans are also transnational, as the internet is so widely available (Monk, 2011). In an interview for the European Screen Heritage Conference at Leeds in 2013, Monk specifically mentioned American Anglophiles who are interested in the 'pretty aesthetic', which would suggest an appreciation for the country house myth through screen imagery (2013, p. 4). The audience of the pre-web days of Monk's 2012 book were 'reactive, differentiated and respectful', whereas the post-web audience is 'infinite, participatory and transgressive' (Monk, 2011, p. 145). The key with the post-web audiences is their inclination to participatory behaviour, which suggests an interest in being a part of the narrative, and therefore visiting the locations seen on screen.

Many of these fans are responding to minority storylines that Monk (1995), Cook (1996) and Pidduck (2004) analyse in their writing – often the gay or female characters and narrative.

Jenkins describes fans removing the original music or narrative from the production, chopping and changing scenes, and putting in new music or dialogue and uploading the remodelled video onto the internet (2013, p. 228). Monk (2011) observes fans utilising this model of involvement with the film *Maurice* (1987) intermixed with scenes from *Sherlock* (2010–present), with actor Rupert Greaves appearing in both, though only as a gay character in *Maurice* (2011, p. 450). Monk's and Jenkins' research into fan culture and heritage dramas is essential in understanding why and how country house heritage sites choose to reproduce media narratives on-site, and the way in which they do this, as this work suggests these participatory fans interested in transgressive narratives are those with the motivation to visit and travel, and when they travel, they may have expectations to experience the hyper-real location at the real site, which may cause a dissonance between expectation and reality.

2.5.2 The Importance of Film Tourism

To understand why and how country houses engage with filming and reproduce film and television narratives on-site, it is necessary to understand the phenomenon of film tourism. De Groot (2009) discussed the urge audiences have for connecting with history personally and how many favour being directly involved with or watching re-enactment. De Groot (2009) implies the importance of the agency of the individual regarding historical experiences and 'everyday' history wherein the participant learns what it might have been like for him or herself to live in the past. Film and re-enactment interlink where the tourist is looking for an authentic engagement with media narratives. Beeton (2005, p. 4) discusses how influential popular media is on 'reinforcing particular images of these destinations …

From the mid-twentieth century, film (and later television) became the main mass media outlet and has been particularly effective in affecting tourism.' Television and film serve as a 'pulling force' for tourists to visit locations seen on screen, but there must be a strong representation of the location in the imagery or the story to make the connection (Croy & Heitmann, 2011). Screen media influences the choices tourists make about where to travel and what to do when they are in a new place (Tooke & Baker, 1996). For the viewer, the film can be the principal source of information about a location and the film helps create a familiarity with the location and the culture (Croy & Heitmann, 2011), yet this is problematic if the film is illusory. Connell (2012) has outlined the growth of the research in film tourism, which touches on topics such as the importance of destination marketing with film and television, the importance of perception and image in decision-making by the tourist, and how mediatised the tourist gaze has become. Iwashita (2008) observed the strength of repeated cultural imagery of Britain on Japanese audiences and how it encouraged international visitors to England. On-site, screen media can help create a unique experience and give a location the unique distinguishing status of having been a film location and part of a new story (Croy and Heitmann, 2011). Film tourism is viewed as an opportunity within the heritage sector, and as such is becoming highly researched.

The heritage drama creates stronger reasons for the viewer to become the tourist, especially with the availability of tourist locations, experiences and heritage sites featured in film and television that market themselves as such. MacCannell (1976) and Beeton (2005) note that tourism attractions require certain 'markers' which signify specific meanings, and those markers can easily be film and television images and narratives. Zimmerman and

Reeves (2009) suggest film automatically creates new narratives for the heritage site. Being part of media stories and subsequent cultural meaning imbues the locations with a greater sense of meaning than the heritage location has in itself. Beeton (2005, p. 5) notes that the tourist's search for 'nature, scenery and mountains' as well as the tendency for the 'countryside to symbolise the "golden place" that still exists in the psyche of urbanites today … has had a major impact on the development and imaging of tourism'. Here is exemplified the rural country house idyll in the mind of the tourist visitor. Some country houses must also deal with the complicated narratives of the historical film, especially those that utilise true historical narratives but do not stay close to the truth. These films further interest in specific real stories and have the potential to reach global audiences but may take control out of the hands of the local heritage interpreters (Frost, 2006).

Seaton (1998, p. 9) also notes the importance of the picturesque in tourism: the 'ideology of landscape as pretty pictures for consumers, to be enjoyed as a visual experience'. The visual experience is prioritised over others, suggesting why film and television have had such a major impact on tourist destinations and visitor numbers. Beeton (2005, p. 5) states 'rough bridges, sunsets, moonlight, cattle, hedgerows and winding tree-lined lanes being some of the desired elements' in both film and for tourists. Film tourism has a positive effect on the location through increased tourist and economic flow as well as the increased awareness, marketing and branding opportunities as outlined through several studies commissioned in the past ten years, including 'Stately Attraction: How Film and Television Programmes Promote Tourism in the UK' (2007), 'Culture, Attraction and Soft Power' (2014) and 'Quantifying Film and Television Tourism in England' (2015).

There are many pitfalls associated with sites new to film-induced tourism, including insufficient infrastructure (Connell and Meyer, 2009) or the issues with tourists/film viewers' unexpected disappointment at being unable to experience a location identical to the one on screen (Connell and Meyer, 2009; Gunning, 2010). Croy and Heitmann (2011) suggest there is a growing distrust of film and television representations, and utilising screen iconography on-site may give a negative and inauthentic feeling to a visitor. Heritage managers always face a problem with catering to differing tourist types; there are some that expect film and television experiences and those who will be disappointed if there is any mention of fictional narratives on-site (Muresan and Smith, 1998). Butler (2011) also illustrates the problem of film locations being used as other locales, for example Ireland standing in for Scotland (Bolan *et al.*, 2011). This can also cause confusion and disappointment for the tourist and problems for heritage managers attempting to capitalise on film tourism. As always, a lack of authenticity, however defined by the tourist, will be the cause of displacement and disappointment within the tourist's personal experience (Bolan *et al.*, 2011). Beeton (2005) describes the hyper-real state of the heritage location as able to 'straddle fiction and reality', reminding one of Gunning's (2010) warning of the disappointment on a fan's face when a location is not exactly as pictured in the imagination (or on film) (Connell and Meyer, 2009).

2.6 Conclusion

This literature review chapter has given the reader a background in the concepts that will be used to analyse the qualitative data from across English country house sites, with a focus on the production and presentation of the heritage experience for visitors in relation to

commercial film and television productions. The following context chapter will give further background to the English country house and its history, the film and television environment in Britain and the process undertaken when the country house heritage site participates in film production.

This chapter outlined the making of myths, understanding the theory behind the development of myths from Saussure (1983), Baudrillard (1994), Selwyn (1996) and Barthes (2009) in the first section. It outlined the relationship between film and television mediums and mythmaking, and developed the meanings and values associated with the English country house myth, such as tradition, nostalgia, class and landscape, and developed some theory behind the relationship between the country house and English or British cultural identity. This section also delved into the liaison between the development of the country house myth and popular culture, outlining the different types of popular culture, over the centuries, that have contributed to the development of the country house myth with authors such as Matless (1998), Smith (2006) and de Groot (2009). This section will be utilised later in the thesis to understand a theory called the English country house meta-narrative.

The second part of the chapter focused on the country house as a commodified space. There is a long history of debate over the problematising of the commercialisation of the history and heritage space, and the English country house forms part of this debate. I outlined the history of the country house as a commercial and tourist orientated space, which is often forgotten in the development of the country house myth. Smith's (2006) concept of the authorised heritage discourse is useful in understanding the theory behind

the way in which the country house is read by the public and the acceptable concepts associated to the country house, which make up the country house myth. It also discussed management of country houses in relation to the country house heritage drama (Sargent, 2000) and the key business drivers that make a heritage site successful (Hughes and Carlsen, 2010). These include successful branding and marketing, interpretation and visitors' experiences, and connections to emotional and national identities.

Thirdly, the literature review explored the heritage drama, as the main home of the country house on screen and the major place where the country house myth is developed in the twenty-first century. It explored how the country house is portrayed on screen, set as landscape or a character and with music, sumptuous costumes and other associations to British identity. It explored the basic theories of screen representation, and authors such as Wollen (1991) and Higson (2003) illustrate the interactions between the heritage drama and national identity. It gave a brief overview of the heritage debate from authors such as Wright (1985), Hewison (1987), Wollen (1991) and Craig (1991) and the critical reception of the heritage drama. Higson (2003) takes the critiques of this debate and argues that the heritage drama, set at the country house, is representative of Englishness and thus ties the English country house and the heritage drama together in representing Englishness.

Lastly, the chapter explored the audiences for the country house on screen, understanding the basic tenants of audience and reception theory. Austin (2002) illustrates that audiences are not as simplistic as they have been understood in the past and bring an agency to their consumption of the heritage on screen. Monk's (2011; 2012; 2013) work uses analysis of data on heritage audiences to make nuanced observations and theories, rather than

personal observations from other critics in the heritage debate. Her subtle look at the audiences for the heritage costume drama helps to illustrate how and why country house sites react to film and television representations in the way that will be explored in Chapters 5 and 6. Jenkins' (2013) observations on fan culture further add to this background on the country house audience. Film tourism studies develop the audience when they become visitors and explore the expectations and needs of the film tourist (Connell, 2012; Bakiewicz, 2015) as well as the impact these expectations have on the country house heritage site.

As Cox (2018) suggests, the English County House, as a concept, has become synonymous with English or British identity and represents a nostalgic reminiscence of the better days of the past. This thesis seeks to identity how this myth, through its media representations, has come to be reproduced on-site and what this means for the English country house.

CHAPTER 3

PLACING THE SCREEN COUNTRY HOUSE AND THE PRODUCTION AND PRESENTATION OF THE COUNTRY HOUSE HERITAGE VISITOR EXPERIENCE WITHIN ITS HISTORICAL, GEOGRAPHICAL AND PRODUCTION CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into two major sections to give a stronger background to the context of the research. The literature review delved into the country house myth and the values and associated meanings that have developed with the country house and its imagery. It also addressed the role of popular culture in creating the country house narrative myth. This chapter will explore the history of the English country house through a number of authors who have taken on the topic as well as the history of country house visiting. By exploring this history, however lightly, it gives context to the country house narrative myth and the place of the country house in English history as well as the consciousness of English people. Historically, the country house glorifies wealth, power and class, and reflects the social, cultural and architectural whims of each period, changing and adapting to new components of country house society. At the same time, the country house characterises a very strong element of nostalgia in every generation, always representing the past as better than the present. This element of nostalgia is the core element of the country house myth which makes it popular on film and television.

The second part of this context chapter will explore the economic and political environment in the UK for the making of film and television. It will then guide the reader through the

process of a country house heritage site being involved with attracting a film production, negotiating a contract, taking part in the shooting and maintaining a relationship between location managers/film producers and the country house site. This background will root the analysis of Chapters 5 and 6 firmly in the environment of filmmaking and will be a contextualisation of referrals from the analysis. It also outlines the benefits cycle between heritage, the media and tourism which comes from filmmaking at heritage sites.

Lastly, this chapter will touch on a few effects of the relationship between the country house site and the film production, its imagery and its narratives. Highlighting some of the advantages and disadvantages of the relationship in relation to funding, brand awareness, corporate events and staff development leads into the discussion and analysis of Chapters 5 and 6, which delve deeply into the relationship between film producers and country house management, as well as the material culture of the presentation and production of film narratives at the country house heritage site. This chapter gives a full context to the space in which this research, and its analysis, has occurred.

3.2 The English Country House: A Heritage Concept and Its History

3.2.1 The Concept of the English Country House as Heritage

Heritage has a broad definition, encompassing 'landscapes, historic places, sites and built environments, as well as biodiversity, collections, past and continuing cultural practices, knowledge and living experiences' all involving some element of the past (ICOMOS, 1999). The public interact with heritage daily, thus the definition, or meaning, of heritage is never concrete. Samuel (1994) notes history and heritage are present in everyday lives, and the

public interact with heritage through many media interfaces, and often without realisation, such as when shopping, seeing advertisements, on tourism posters or in magazines. Thus, consumers tend to feel history is tangible in the present, and personal imagination is utilised to place the self within the context of history. Considering the placement of the individual experience in the heritage context, it follows that most modern heritage experiences have an element of human construction, where creators of heritage literature and media express certain concepts and values by manipulating the cultural process of the heritage site.

The country house, and its myth, has very much been created through Samuel's described processes. The publicly accessible country houses in England present a varied collection of interpretations of the past available for consumption, each outlining the unique history, architecture, art, stories, landscape and cultural practices of the house and greater estate. As Samuel (1994) outlined, the visitor brings his or her own memories and experiences to a country house visit, and by visiting the country house brings the past to the present. Smith (2009) suggests the cultural heritage object (in this case the country house) has a 'social value', meaning that its heritage value lies in its ability to negotiate and re-create values of the past in relation to present society. She further posits that certain heritage objects have greater meaning when they represent values that society, or sections of society, wish to pass on to future generations. In relation to the English country house, it has developed a meaning most associated with landscape, tradition, class, wealth and nostalgia, as detailed in the literature review, and an association with the English or British identity.

British heritage, specifically aristocratic heritage, has long been a signifier of Britain's dominant culture, both domestically and internationally (Monk, 2013), and the English

country house is the epitome of aristocratic heritage, wherein class and wealth have physically shaped the appearance of the built and landscape heritage. For many, the country house is the repository of the cultural patrimony of England, and the architecture, art and furnishings are representative of the greatness of England and its former Empire. It is useful to understand the discourse surrounding the country house and heritage utilising Smith's (2009) authorised heritage discourse (AHD). Smith defines heritage as 'not seen as a thing – it is not a country house, or other place, monument or artefact – but rather what happens at and with those places, monuments or artefacts' (2009, p. 35). Here it is understood that the physical country house itself, as a piece of architecture, is not the full story of the English country house as a heritage element. It is the many family dramas, servants' lives, agricultural practices, landscape gardening, novels, plays, tourists, sporting events and many other activities which took place in and around the country house that make up its narrative myth. The question remains, in this context, where the 'real' history of the country house lies in relation to the country house narrative myth. This section of the chapter seeks to give the reader of this thesis a background understanding of the English country house through history.

3.2.2 A Short History of the English Country House

This section takes a brief look at the history of the country house and country house visiting as a tourist leisure activity, which will illuminate the context of the English country house in relation to the development of the narrative myth. This history, extremely complicated and not fully developed here in any way, also sheds light on how film and television utilise history and the narrative myth. The scope of this research could stretch across the British

Isles, as the concept of the country house exists in all four countries of the United Kingdom, but each country has a unique experience with class, tradition, landscape and the country house itself. Scottish country house (often castles) history and architecture differs from the other UK countries, while Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland have a different relationship to the traditional aristocracy than England does. This research focuses on the English country house.

This short contextual history relates to the development of the English country house and the English country house narrative. There is not one single physical description of the 'country house'; there is variation in architectural style, history, size, shape and very nearly every other attribute. There is no original 'country house'; architectural styles have been adapted to variant popular culture, economics, social and political environments over hundreds of years. From fortress castles made habitable, Georgian Palladian villas to Victorian houses, large palaces to modest manors and their corresponding landscapes, the definition of the physical country house is varied, and cannot be collected under one definition. Within the heritage sector of England, the country house (in its broadest definition) is one of the most recognisable forms of heritage to visitors. Images of the country house in its landscape adorn tourist brochures and propaganda, and foreign visitors name heritage as a major reason for visiting Britain, with 44% of respondents to a British Council survey saying historic buildings made the country attractive to visit (Culligan *et al.*, 2014). This places the country house in a unique position of representing England's culture, both at home and abroad.

3.2.3 Origins of the Country House and Country House Tourism

Kelsall (1993, p. 11) argues that the importance of the country house is connected to the Roman settlements of Britain and was 'taken up by the English imagination from the writings of antiquity'; this is based on the Roman villa in the British landscape as representative of a seat of power. The first *English* 'country houses' were fortresses and castles designed to protect from hostile forces up through the Middle Ages; these buildings were constructed for basic use, not comfort or aesthetics (Kelsall, 1993). These castle fortresses represented control over the landscape and the people of England, but at the conclusion of the Wars of the Roses in 1485, the stability of the monarchy allowed for these fortified castles to be made more comfortable and aesthetically pleasing. It is these castles modified for comfort that Kelsall (1993) considers the first 'country houses' as modern visitors would imagine them, and a number of medieval castles are, in fact, comfortable homes today, such as Berkeley Castle and Alnwick Castle. The change from fortress to home sees the construction of country houses for more than protection; they were being built at the centre of communities and held by the powerful lord. The act of building a great country house was a benefit for the local economy and engaged whole communities. It became a place where local people were employed, and a flourishing country house meant a rural area was productive and fertile.

By the eighteenth century, Kelsall (1993) notes that the important attributes of the country house were the aesthetics and architecture of the building rather than the commercial use of the estate; the older, non-uniform manor houses, which had been added to over time, were a sign of social failure. The wealthy and landed were interested in building a completely new country house in the style of the culture of the period. For instance, it is at

this time the Duke of Marlborough built Blenheim Palace in the early eighteenth century, a grand new castle, and later his wife had the previous palace on the land, Woodstock Manor, destroyed. Many of the old manor houses fell into disrepair and were abandoned as the fashion for country houses designed with new architectural ideals by famous architects became popular. The eighteenth-century Georgians wanted a beautiful country house and garden to fit the fashion of the time period; the perception of a country estate by visitors was key to their social status. The spectacle of wealth, power, convenience and comfort defined the Georgian country house; knowing the fashionable taste was paramount, and the collection of art, architecture and good furnishings implied the status of the owner (Mandler, 1997). The upper-class inhabitants of the country houses began to distance themselves from the rest of the community as the gap in wealth widened between rich and poor and the country houses of the elite became islands of affluence and 'good taste' (Mandler, 1997). The country house was no longer a home; it was an important status symbol.

These new estates were filled with the curiosities collected from European countries and places further afield. Great galleries were built to display paintings and sculpture; the practice of displaying objects in cabinets for viewing ease was developed on the Continent and migrated to England (Tinniswood, 1998). It is these great palaces that left an indelible mark on the English landscape; for the modern visitor, the great palatial buildings define the country house, not least because they are common motifs and settings in popular literature and media. In the eighteenth century, to present his status to his peers, the Georgian opened his home to visitors to view the great assembly of art, historical objects and foreign

collections, hence the tradition of country house visiting was born out of a desire and need to demonstrate wealth and power. For many in the lower classes, a visit to a country house was a unique and rare leisure activity, and possibly their only interaction with the spaces usually reserved for the upper classes; not unlike a soap opera or period drama, visitors were often more interested in the activities of the wealthy family than the historical or cultural importance of the objects in the collection (Tinniswood, 1998). By the late eighteenth century, the popularity of medieval history and heritage sites was on the rise, and comparing the present negatively to the past, a Georgian medieval nostalgic 'retrochic', was more common (Tinniswood, 1998). Even then, people were looking for what Tinniswood calls 'an escape route into a safer, more congenial world' (1998, p. 135), and the country house myth presented a space and imagery in which to reminisce.

3.2.4 The Victorian Country House

The Victorian era's country house is signified by the social amalgamation of the traditional landed elite (the aristocracy) and the commercial, industrial elite (the new money), the process of which required both groups to make adjustments to incorporate this change in way of life. A 'heritage consciousness', an awareness of the past which we would now call heritage, developed on the national level, and Mandler describes the Victorians as using this historical consciousness to 'correct the social imbalance of the "polite vision" of the eighteenth century' (1997, p. 21). As the century wore on, the Victorian public became more aware of the historical castles and country homes throughout England, and the ease of rail travel made viewing them possible. The Victorian middle- and upper-class visiting population had more time and more discretionary income with which to enjoy leisure

activities due to changes in social and working structures. Even outspoken writers, journalists and politicians who defined themselves as Liberal and anti-aristocracy understood the benefits of opening country homes to the public and 'the workingman and his family' enjoying a day in the countryside, although this type of thinking suggests a level of benevolent paternalism typical of the Victorian Era (Mandler, 1997). During the mid- to late nineteenth century, commerce and urbanisation continued to grow and mass leisure activities such as sports and seaside and rail holidays became competition for the country house and heritage sites, while the landed aristocracy suffered a number of political and economic hardships that made it difficult for owners to maintain the public accessibility of their homes and land (Mandler, 1997). A section of middle-class 'artists and intellectuals' fought to maintain the interest in heritage and art, which in turn became a protest against the dominant rapid march to modernity.

3.2.5 The Edwardian Country House

It is in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when the divide between rural and urban life becomes even greater and the lower classes residing in the urban setting became unable to escape and enjoy the countryside. As a response to the urbanisation of England's cities, a yearning for non-industrial culture developed and the countryside began to gain a mythic conception of 'stability, tranquillity, continuity and tradition', contrasting the 'moral and spiritual sterility of industrial England' (Tinniswood, 1998, p. 168). Access to the country house and rural pursuits and enjoyments was limited to those few with wealth and free time, and it was common for leisured professional classes to engage in hunting, shooting and fishing for a price on the rural estates (Mandler, 1997). The new industrial wealthy from

urban centres inhabited the rural space and experienced the traditional sporting activities, then returned to the city having absorbed the expected value and meaning attached to the country house lifestyle. Enjoying the country pursuits became a status symbol for those looking to legitimise their class distinction; in the early twentieth century Christopher Hussey and *Country Life* magazine began publication, featuring country houses and espousing the joys of living in the country (Tinniswood, 1998).

With the financial hardships on the country house through changing economies and taxation during the Victorian and Edwardian years, public auctions of the contents of great houses were more common, which meant collections, and sometimes the houses themselves, were sold to foreign buyers (Mandler, 1997). Societies appeared with mandates to protect the England that was 'vanishing before their eyes' (Tinniswood, 1998, p. 172), such as the Commons Preservation Society (1866), the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (1877) and the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty (1895). These organisations, the ease of travel to the countryside for those with the time and money, and publications such as *Country Life*, brought the country house and aristocratic heritage into the public eye and made it an object of desire (Tinniswood, 1998). The country house achieved an international level of awareness with the arrival of wealthy American heiresses looking for aristocratic titles and English gentleman, and the country house was subsequently influenced by American tastes and 'susceptible to the romance of history' perpetrated by the media at the time (Aslet, 2013, p. 23). The country house was gaining a mythical status in the eyes of the British as well as visitors from overseas looking

to buy into the mythical country house narrative and all its associated tradition, class, wealth and nostalgia.

3.2.6 The Post-First World War Country House

The First World War changed British society fundamentally and Mandler suggests England was caught between the feudal, class-driven past and a modern, more egalitarian future, while the national conscience at this time was 'hopelessly in thrall to nostalgia' (Mandler, 1997, p. 225). The aristocracy parted with land to regain wealth and this re-appropriated the countryside to the masses. Country house land was sold to build housing developments and suburbs; the countryside lost out to urbanisation and population growth. Some landed elite found buyers for their homes, but the economic and tax situation often meant the contents were sold and the physical house left to ruin or sold for scrap, as neither the people nor the government were interested in saving the homes of the traditional elite. At the time, the Ministry of Works was preserving ancient sites such as Stonehenge, which resonated with larger numbers of English people, who found the roots of their national identity in ancient Britain, rather than the country house landscape (Thurley, 2013).

Prior to the Second World War, the Ramblers' Association (1932) and the Campaign to Protect Rural England (1926) joined the aforementioned preservation societies in working to preserve and conserve the countryside way of life and its importance to the public consciousness in England (Matless, 1998). At the same time, the Marquee of Lothian inherited a number of great houses and, in 1930, urged the National Trust to acknowledge the destruction of the country house and to move its focus from natural open spaces to the

country estate (Lees-Milne, 1974). Upon his insistence, the National Trust created a specific task force, headed by James Lees-Milne, and, with the help of *Country Life* magazine, urged historians and countryside enthusiasts to recognise the country house as part of England's heritage (Mandler, 1996). A tax-exempt status for houses that were open to the public was suggested if the house agreed to maintain their natural and historical landscape (Mandler, 1997). The National Trust was tasked with convincing aristocrats of the benefits of this project; only a few were interested in this scheme by the outbreak of the Second World War and the project was considered a failure (Mandler, 1996).

3.2.7 The Post-Second World War Country House

After the Second World War, *Country Life* ran a series of articles entitled 'The Future of the Great Country Houses' exploring the place of the country house in post-war society (Tinniswood, 1998), and Lees-Milne fought for the nation to recognise the country house as a piece of art or architecture 'rather than as a symbol of the social order' (Mandler, 1996, p. 103). Scholars and preservationists became involved with the great collections of the country houses and started writing and broadcasting about the art preserved within their walls (Mandler, 1996). The Gowers Report (1950) stated the 'way of life' of the country house was worth preserving and the National Trust, not the government, was best suited for the task of preservation (Mandler, 1996). Christopher Hussey, a well-known architect and *Country Life* contributor, stated the country house was 'Britain's unique contribution to tourism worldwide' (Tinniswood, 1998, p. 184). The National Trust launched the 'Country House Scheme' (1939) wherein landowners could transfer their house to the Trust in lieu of death duties and were duly given grants and loans for repair and maintenance in return for

opening their homes and grounds for public enjoyment (Tinniswood, 1998). The legacy of this movement is highly evidenced in the way heritage is viewed and consumed by the English in the twenty-first century. The work of these scholars and activists laid the groundwork for Smith's authorised heritage discourse and the place of the country house within the nation's conscious and identity.

The first post-war house to enter the 'stately-home business' *outside* of the National Trust scheme was Longleat, the home of the Marquess of Bath, opening its doors on 1 April 1949 and offering tours of the house and grounds. The Marquess later recalled, '…we thought Women's Institutes, British Legions, etc, like to be told funny anecdotes about the family. Quite frankly, I don't think that Rembrandts or Van Dycks interest them very much.' (Tinniswood 1998, p. 196) This quote clearly illustrates the continuing interest in class, the country house as a symbol of wealth, power and aristocracy, and is prescient of today's fascination with period dramas. The country house gained its place among the important symbols of English heritage, culture and identity, but the public has not lost their appetite for seeing behind closed doors and knowing what those with more power and money do in their homes. By the late 1960s, glamorous movies were filmed at country houses, and the cult of film and celebrity helped the private homes become tourist attractions, while the National Trust gained a reputation for nostalgia and conservatism (Mandler, 1996).

3.2.8 The Country House of Today: 1970–present

From the early 1970s, Marcus Binney and his pressure group, SAVE Britain's Heritage, mobilised a younger generation to preserve the countryside for the nation, publishing the

book *The Destruction of the Country House: 1875–1975* (Binney *et al.*, 1974). Adams (2013) suggests the purpose of this book and its exhibition at the V&A was to highlight the choice of the organisers to paint the country house as symbolic of England's heritage and to illustrate how devastating the loss of these estates would be to English culture, society and identity. By the 1980s, Tinniswood describes the country house as a 'leisure industry, with condescension and class discrimination replaced by detailed analysis of spending patterns and demographic surveys' (1998, p. 200). Beginning in the 1990s, country houses were offering a broad range of activities for the tourist, who no longer were visiting solely to see the home of an aristocrat. Country houses offer educational experiences, historical interpretation, tearooms and restaurants, guided tours, children's activities, family days out, gardening classes and activities, any number of types of exhibitions and other more specific attractions, such as miniature railways or the zoo at Longleat. When the University of Nottingham surveyed visitors' reasons for country house visits, over a quarter answered with 'a day out', while over half the people asked said they visited to find out 'how people lived in the past' (Tinniswood, 1998, p. 201). Mandler finishes his history of the country house and country house visiting by questioning why the country house has become so popular again at the turn of the twenty-first century. He surmises the country house has become manicured to perfectly fit with modern ideas of countryside, rural-ness, agriculture, design and the enduring interest in nostalgia and the national past (Mandler, 1997). Young (2007) highlights the active commemoration imbedded in the country house, with the concepts of primogeniture acutely in force.

This history should give a brief outline of the general creation of the English country house as a place, a centre of power, a visitor attraction and a representation of English heritage, art and identity. The country house mythology, discussed in the literature review, grew out of the history of the country house and its many facets, changes and turns. Throughout the history, though, runs a string of nostalgia, a harkening to the past as better than the present. It is this nostalgia, especially in uncertain times, that continues to drive the popularity of the country house as a visitor attraction and, for the purposes of this research, drives the commercial and cultural value of the country house on screen. Consumers want to see and feel comforted by the country house and what it represents, just as they have for centuries.

3.3 The Film Industry in Britain

Having given a brief context to the creation of the country house in England, its history and the evolution of the country house as a heritage asset, I will now outline how the film and television industries in Britain function, as the economic and cultural climate for filming has a significant impact on if, when and how filming happens at the country house site. This section gives context to the analysis, helping the reader understand the climate and the structure in which the relationship between the country house site and its representation on television happens.

3.3.1 The Film and Television Climate in England

In 2011, film and its supporting industries were responsible for over 117,400 jobs in the United Kingdom (Oxford Economics, 2012). The UK Film Commission recognises the value of

bringing film and television production to the UK. The British Film Commission (BFC) offers tax breaks and incentives for the media production companies to work in the UK; in 2015 this amounted to between a £8.31 and £12.49 return on investment per pound spent (BFI, 2015). Not only does the film and television industry create jobs and employment opportunities domestically, it is one of the most important sources of advertising for the UK to a global audience. Organisations such as VisitBritain and the GREAT Britain campaign from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office seek to leverage Britain's 'soft' or cultural power abroad, which leads to a high return on investment. The loss in taxation income from the tax relief is small compared to the extensive returns on tourism income.

I. Tax Breaks and Incentives

The BFC has created a comprehensive tax incentive programme to attract the best of film and high-end television drama to shoot in the UK. The incentives include tax rebates up to 25% on up to 80% of core expenditure (made in the UK) with no budget limit when the film production passes the UK Cultural Test or qualifies as an official co-production (BFC, 2019). For high-end television, the tax incentive is 25% rebate on up to 80% core expenditure (made in the UK) of at least £1 million pounds per broadcast hour (BFC, 2019). A number of local film boards and screen agencies also offer incentives for productions to film in their region, such as Screen Yorkshire and Creative Scotland.

II. Production Centres and Locations

Tax rebates and incentives are the foremost reasons for greater numbers of screen productions choosing the UK for filming. Yet there are also a number of additional

supporting opportunities that make the UK attractive to foreign screen investment. Major film hubs in the UK, such as London, Bristol and Cardiff, offer excellent production and studio space located close to major cities and are home to good-quality film crews, special effects organisations and a service industry accustomed to handling the rich and famous. The UK offers a wealth of locations, many of which can stand in for foreign locations; in particular, the varied architecture of the UK's main cities, such as London and Edinburgh, can serve as a plethora of locales and cultural backdrops. Creative England and Film London advertise the best of British locations to foreign companies and are successful in drawing in an even greater number of productions. And, most importantly for this research, the UK offers the screen production industry a globally recognisable brand of history and heritage that gives background with an instantly identifiable meaning to the narrative story on screen. Publications such as *Location UK* (2013) from the BFI advertise the extensive heritage opportunities available for screen productions in the UK; from English country houses such as Highclere Castle to Scottish castles to mills and steam railways, the UK can provide the right location for almost any need.

III. The Country House Landscape

Country houses in particular offer production companies a range of possibilities; from large outdoor spaces to iconic architecture to picturesque gardens and extensive woodland and fields, country houses and their landscapes are supremely cinematic. Many country houses are within an hour of the major production studios and facilities and therefore become favourite filming locations. Film production companies are enticed by the intrinsic value of the country house and its landscape, embodying the values of nostalgia, tradition, class and

Englishness, as discussed by Matless (1998). De Groot (2009) highlighted this phenomenon whereby consumable goods (such as film and television) are imbued with meanings through the use of heritage imagery, and in this case it is the country house representing the nostalgic past. These concepts are discussed in further detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

3.4 The Film Process

The filming, or shooting, process is complicated from start to finish, made more fragile by the nature of the heritage country house location in which the filming takes place. To understand the impact screen representations have on the production of experiences at the country house site, it is useful to illustrate the practical activities of this process. This section outlines the process of attracting filming, negotiating a contract, having a production crew on-site, and the post-filming breakdown. It will then dissect the nuances of the process that impact the country house heritage site, and how these effects can be mitigated or utilised.

3.4.1 Types of Filming

There are a number of production genres that approach country houses for use as locations for film and television. What many country house management teams expect with filming opportunities is a large-scale, big-budget film; but these types of productions are far less common than local news broadcasts, documentaries and low-budget television. The following descriptions come from my own experience working in the industry and conversations with Dr Nancy Sheridan, owner of Heritage4Media.

International Films: These are large-scale international films that come to Britain to make use of the scenery, heritage, locations, studios and tax incentives. The director and writers are often foreign, while the hired crew will be British in order to meet the Cultural Test required by the British Film Institute (BFC, 2019). These productions have big budgets, desire exact locations, and are willing to travel further from production centres (London, Cardiff) and pay crew for travel and lodgings to utilise perfect-fit sites. Country houses dealing with international film productions can expect to be paid a significant amount per day's shooting, but also must deal with extensive requests and crew/actor/staff needs. The global reach of these productions, especially those that do well at the box office, can have major influences for the country house featured. Examples filmed in Britain include: *Jab Tak Hai Jaan* (2012 at Syon House), *Kingsman: The Secret Service* (2014 at Wrotham Park), *Star Wars* (2015 at Puzzlewood), *Spectre* (2015 at Blenheim Palace), and *Kingsman: The Golden Circle* (2017 at the Old Royal Naval College).

Domestic Film and International Television: These two types of productions are amalgamated because they offer similar levels of remunerations for location work. Both domestic film and international television will have a smaller budget and aim to work closer to production centres. Television can be complicated as the crew will leave and return to location throughout a period of months, creating a more complex schedule for the heritage site. Both offer good exposure, though not as globally relevant as international film, unless a television programme happens to be picked up around the world. Examples of domestic films in Britain include: *The Bad Education Movie* (2015), *About Time* (2013) and *Dad's Army*

(2015), while examples of international television filmed in Britain include: *Downton Abbey* (2010–15), *Game of Thrones* (2011–19), *Galavant* (2014–15) and *Outlande*r (2014–present).

Domestic Television Drama: This is by far the most common form of production in the UK. Every year numerous programmes are made in the UK and financed by British television companies or independent producers. These are based around production cities like London, Bristol and Cardiff and film locations are usually within a one-hour drive of the main city. As one would expect, this is a benefit for country houses located near to these cities but does leave out those further afield. Many British television programmes become very popular with domestic audiences and a portion of these also reach a global audience through broadcasting company partnerships (such as PBS in the USA) and online streaming services. If the house becomes a main location in one of these popular series, the staff can expect an impact from screen tourism. Examples filmed in Britain include: *Poldark* (2015–19), *Victoria* (2016–present), *The Crown* (2016–present) and *Gentleman Jack* (2019).

Reality Television and Documentary Programmes: These present a diversity of benefits and disadvantages. Though neither of these types of productions pay a large location fee to the locations they use, they do offer alternative remunerations, such as noting the name and details of locations at which they are filmed on screen. However, reality shows always hold potential for highly negative publicity. Interviewee Harvey Edgington, Head of Filming and Locations at the National Trust, spoke to me about a reality show the National Trust accepted, yet in the end they were negatively portrayed on screen. This is not always the case, however, as both Chatsworth House and Haddon Hall had good experiences with reality shows, such as with *Chatsworth* (2012). One historic country house with whom I

worked turned down an offer from the E4 show *Made in Chelsea* due to the negative associations with 'posh' entitled young people that might come with participating with this reality show. Documentaries often offer little in terms of financial reward but can be very useful to country houses as they often recount true stories and interesting narratives, which can be particularly beneficial to drawing interest in the house, not unlike the fascination with period dramas and historical fictions. Furthermore, documentaries will sometimes offer to partner with the heritage location and allow footage to be used by the country house, benefiting both the documentary team and location management. Similarly to some reality programmes, film locations in documentaries are often named and discussed in specificity, providing free and direct advertisement.

Daily and Talk Shows, Light News Stories: This type of filming is almost never paid but can be useful for a country house in terms of PR and marketing. Edgington (2015) described creating interesting shorts based on stories from the National Trust and sending these pitches to programmes like *Countryfile* and *The One Show* to use at any point in the future. Interviewee Roland Brown of Berkeley Castle and interviewee David Hingley of Hampton Court Palace spoke about having BBC's *The One Show* feature their sites for light news stories and the positive impact this had on awareness and visitor numbers.

3.4.2 When Productions Engage with the Country House

The engagement between the country house and the production company can happen in a number of ways. Location managers, who source and look after film locations, have a wide knowledge of potential locations throughout the UK and will go 'scouting' for what is

needed for a new project. Often, they will reach out to intermediaries, such as location agencies (ex. JJ Locations, LocationWorks), heritage specific agencies (ex. Heritage4Media), or national organisations such as Creative England or the National Trust. Interviewee Stephen Badham, Senior Production Liaison Manager at Creative England (2015), spoke at length about the types of locations available to productions in the UK, and his in-depth knowledge would assist a location manager in finding the right country house site for the project. The National Trust produces a catalogue of their sites (now online) that is distributed to locations managers; enquiries then revert back to Harvey Edgington and his team who are in turn able to work closely with both potential properties and location managers. Creative England itself maintains a database of locations, and heavily publicises the English locations which can stand in for locations around the globe. Organisations such as Creative England work symbiotically with the tourism bodies that are promoting England, Great Britain and the UK to overseas markets, which in turn encourages tourists to visit heritage sites.

A number of locations promote themselves to location managers; once a property has been used in film and television productions there is a likelihood it will be used again, particularly if the shoot went well and the country house is seen as 'easy to work with'. Heritage organisations like the Historic Houses Association and the National Trust, and companies like Creative England and FilmLondon, advise houses on how to raise awareness of their use as screen locations. Badham (2015) also suggested ways heritage locations could further engage with producers and locations managers, such as film-friendly events, visit days for production crews, location manager tours and engaging through networking. Through at

least one, or more, of these conduits, heritage locations and location managers find each other, and the negotiating process begins.

3.4.3 Choosing a Country House Location

The location is chosen by the production company based on a number of factors, including the quality of the location, how well the location fits the artistic brief, and how the designers can interpret the script within the parameters of the location. Additional factors in the process include: isolation/noise disruption, modern appliances in the house and modern entities seen from the house, a nearby site with a fast internet connection for a temporary production office, space to build sets, 3-phase power, water supply, strong WiFi at the location, and the ability of the fabric of the building to withstand heavy camera equipment. A consideration vital to production is whether the unit base can be on-site; the unit base includes technical vehicles, changing rooms, hair and make-up, toilets, catering vehicles and lot space for cast and crew vehicles. For instance, having a large parking area of hard standing can be the deciding factor in utilising a heritage location. A surprising consideration can be foot traffic; the lower the visitor numbers to a property, the easier it is for the production crew to carry out their duties, and the less has to be paid to cover loss of income (Interview with Dr Nancy Sheridan, 2015).

The heritage site itself, its location and its ease of use are all integral in being chosen for a production, but having positive continuing relationships with location managers is the best indicator and facilitator of accruing more filming in future. Many location managers are looking for ‘precincts’, or a number of properties suitable for different scenes and locations

within a small geographical area (Interview with Stephen Badham, 2015). For instance, the area between Bristol and Gloucester has a number of country houses in different styles, as well as other types of locations, and is used often by television programmes based at the Bottleyard Studios in Bristol. Country houses within this area are more likely to be used repeatedly in film and television productions. While geographic factors are outside the control of the heritage site, other factors are controllable; the ease of working with a house or estate is paramount to getting filming and being the recipient of higher quality (and therefore better paying) shoots. The easier it is for the location manager to get the site film-ready and the easier it is to work with staff, owners and managers during the shoot, the better it is for the production (Interview with Stephen Badham, 2015). Some organisations and individual properties have gained a reputation for being 'difficult' to work with and therefore are avoided by most production crews. For some locations, there is a personal connection between a director and a heritage location; for instance, while working in the industry, a respected filmmaker was specifically interested in Woodchester Mansion from his personal experience on-site and wanted to film parts of his next series there.

3.4.4 The Negotiating Process

The transaction between the country house and the production company is financial at its heart. The location wants to be compensated well and fairly for use, incorporating any potential damage to historic fabric and disruption to normal operating procedure and visitor experience into the fee; the production company aims to pay as little as is fair to get the best experience and location for their production. These conflicting needs come into play in the agreement between the two main parties. This negotiation can include more parties,

when a location agency, commercial advisor (such as Savills Commercial Heritage) or land agent (such as Savills Land Agents) is involved in representing the location. The intricacies of the negotiations illustrate the how value can be assigned to heritage sites as film locations; country houses become 'worth' more or less depending on the needs of the producer and cost of having a production on-site. Negotiations are also the time when the country house can push to have access to press imagery or screen credits and should ask to have these benefits in written statements. Ideally, negotiations should be beneficial for both parties, creating a symbiotic relationship. For instance, Harvey Edgington (Interview 2015) at the National Trust has developed strong links with producers, and the National Trust often releases information about filming locations in conjunction with the release of a television programme, such as was the case with *Poldark* and *Wolf Hall.* These discussions should be handled as delicately and as amicably as is reasonable, as they set the tone of the entire relationship between the two parties involved with shooting on-site. For many sites, part of the process of negotiation is an understanding of conservation. A set of conservation guidelines will be drawn up in association with the financial and legal contract. Although the production company is required to take out insurance for risk on-site during the film process, it is best practice to have an understanding between the crew and the heritage site about what can or cannot be undertaken prior to beginning filming. These conservation guidelines cover everything from candles, lighting and haze to floor coverings and removal of paintings. The conservation guidelines allow for everyone on set to know the parameters and the chain of contact should anything become a question.

3.4.5 On-Site During the Shoot

During the shoot, the country house has to worry about two major issues: the needs, activities and well-being of the crew; and the impact of the filming on the day-to-day running of the country house and its visitors or guests. For private country houses not open to the public, the problem of visitors or guests is not an issue, but all have to deal with the potential difficulties of having over one hundred people on location with heavy equipment and dirty boots. The location crew will arrive in the days before the shoot to set up floor and wall coverings, signage and security measures. They are followed by the art team, who prepare the rooms or outside spaces to fit the brief for the scenes allocated to the location; this is referred to as the 'dress' days. During this time, professional furniture and art removers will attend and mind fragile pieces that are being removed for the duration of the shoot. Furthermore, this day is when a crew arrives on-site to set up the unit base, the production base, and to move large lorries into place with generators and other equipment. Sometimes the heavy equipment includes genie booms and large scaffolding fixtures. Following set-up, the entire crew arrives, including caterers, make-up stylists and security; the cast and their personal assistants. The duration of the shoot, which can last from a day to many weeks, is when many new and diverse requests are made, and problems can arise.

Image 3.1 Berkeley Castle being prepared for filming
(Photograph by author)

As discussed as part of the negotiations, having a conservator on-site and a set of conservation guidelines is advantageous in mitigating damage, but the country house staff should be prepared for a constant discussion between crew and management. While working as a conservator at Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire, I experienced a range of requests and quandaries requiring tact and manoeuvring, from fitting a small lorry under a fragile archway to filming in parts of the castle which had not been approved in the initial negotiations. The staff and management team must deal with these, meaning capacity is

taken away from their regular roles. Highlighting the significance of promoting a positive relationship, Dr Nancy Sheridan (2016), founder of Heritage4Media, suggested, 'Always follow a denial of a request with a suggestion.' This type of attitude shows the crew that while managers are protecting the house and its historic fabric, they also want to facilitate a productive shoot. As can be imagined, many crews can be pushy and demanding, making the atmosphere on location hostile. Surprisingly, the crews using a space for free or a very low fee can be the most difficult, which is attributed to the attitude that the location 'should be happy to have the publicity' (Sheridan, 2016).

The disruption to visitors, or guests in the case of hotels, can be sizeable. Often portions of the historic house or parts of the grounds will be closed to visitors, and a large unit base may be obstructing a portion of the car park. While this can cause aggravation and disappointment for visitors, the country house aims to mitigate this potentially damaging situation whenever possible. Unfortunately, as Lucy Abraham (2015) described, there is often an embargo on discussing the filming, such as which film or programme is shooting and who it is starring; this means the crew and staff of the country house must come up with creative ways of helping the visitor understand why their normal experience has been disrupted. All of the interviewees discussed the importance of information for the visitor and of offering concessions or other perks when filming interrupts the normal visitor experience. Interviewees also reported most visitors are amenable when they understand the large income generation film and television can create for the country house preservation and surrounding area. Some productions are more acquiescent to visitors being a part of the filming day than others depending on the intensity of the shooting

schedule, or if famous actors are part of the cast. David Hingley (2015) of Hampton Court Palace described a production which allowed visitors to walk through the set when they were not shooting, while another would not let them advertise that filming was even taking place due to the sensitive nature of the film's star. The excitement for children to experience a film set with actors in costume and the positive reactions from parents shows good publicity for the country house and potential return visits. While most country houses can deal with the impact on visitor experience, most would prefer not to close to visitors, as this can cause further unhappiness and negative public relations backlash on social channels such as Twitter and Facebook. In this case, locations will often try to have filming during the closed season, although this is becoming increasingly difficult for houses within big organisations such as the National Trust, which is attempting to stay open year-round (Interview with Andrew Loukes, 2015). The interruption to the visitor experience can be problematic, but it can be negotiated when the visitor is shown respect and understanding and even turned into a positive for both the visitor experience ('something different') and the financial gain.

After the shooting days are complete there is a 'strike' day in which the art team and crew return to the location and take down all the pieces built for dressing the set. The professional art handlers also return to reinstall furniture and paintings, and the management of the country house will be on hand to assess any damage and approve a final removal of the film set and crew. This last day, although often a relief after the rigour of filming, can be the most precarious to the relationship between the country house and the location manager, as the small damages and disagreements are discussed and additional

negotiations must take place between the production and the country house as to any physical destruction or loss of income. Between the end of the shoot and the film premiere or television programme broadcast, the location is usually held to the confidentiality of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) and must wait for the public premiere of the film or television programme to begin capitalising on branding and marketing opportunities for the heritage location.

3.5 After Filming

Sheridan's discussion on the economic development cycle of heritage and media is useful in understanding the progression of the association between film and television investment, heritage tourism in the UK, and film- and television-related visitor experiences at heritage locations, which, in turn, increase the demand for period productions (Sheridan, 2013a). Most of the outcomes of a production filming at a heritage location fit into this cycle.

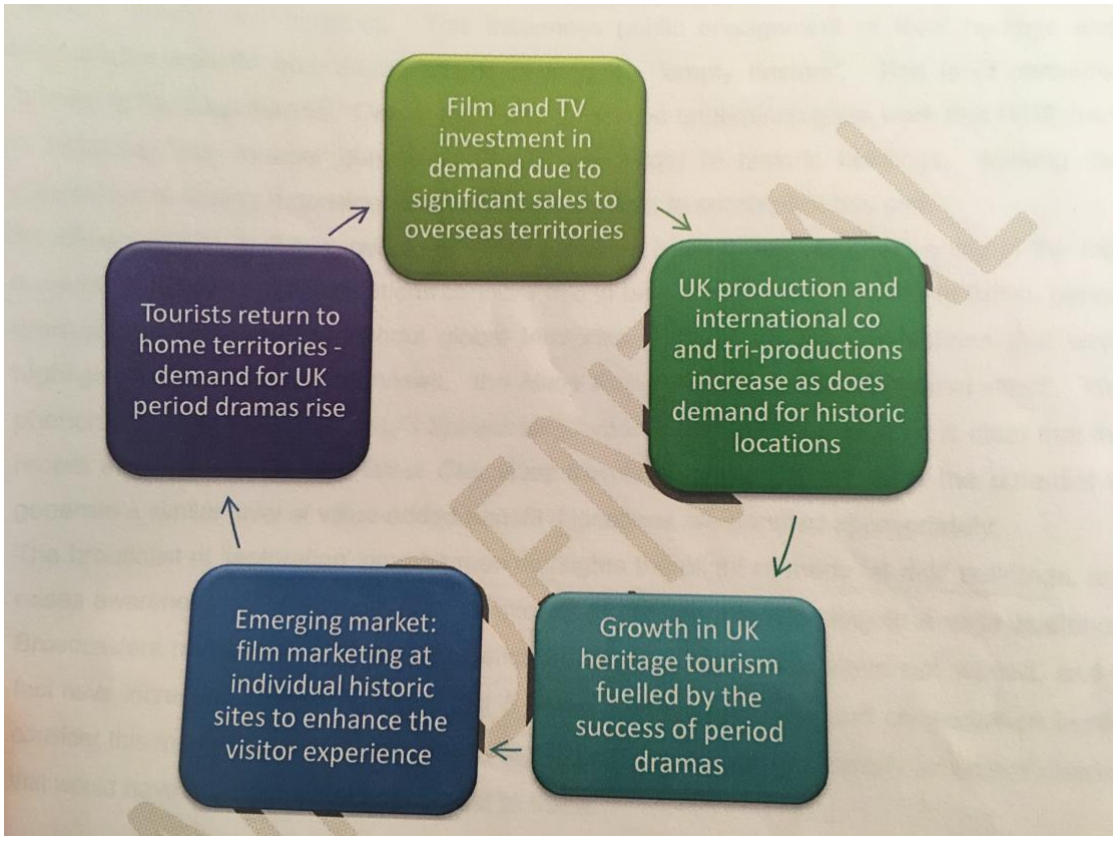


Figure 3.1 The Heritage/Media/Tourism cycle
Dr Nancy Sheridan, 2013a

3.5.1 Production Increase and Funding for Historic Sites

The most measurable positive outcome of commercial film and television utilising country houses as film locales is the increase in direct funding from fees for location use (Sheridan, 2013a). Sheridan (2013a) posited, in 2010, film contributed more than £7,000,000 to the heritage sector from direct facility fees. Although this is spread over a range of properties and locations, it demonstrates how much impact the direct funding has for historic sites, particularly for those in need of filling a financial hole or immediate conservation work. Sheridan (2013a) cites that some buildings have been saved with the cash infusion from the

creative industries. She highlighted the example of Ely Cathedral, where she demonstrated an acceleration of their conservation agenda by hosting the productions of *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007) and *The King's Speech* (2010) (Sheridan, 2013a). Dr Jerzy Kierkuc-Bielinksi (Interview, 2015), curator of Kenwood House, discussed how important the direct income from filming would be for English heritage sites once they became part of an independent charity, and Henry Lytton-Cobbold (Written questionnaire, 2015) of Knebworth House described how 'filming … can rescue a bad year' or 'in a good year, it can give us some profit to reinvest in the house and its heritage'.

3.6 The Experience of Your Country House on Film

3.6.1 Film Reach and Awareness of the Country House

The increased awareness of a heritage site can have a significant impact on visitor numbers to the country house site. A popular film with a large reach will engage a broad audience.

For historic houses, it is important to be able to capitalise on the sudden awareness in terms of publicity and marketing. Any organic growth of awareness can be furthered through strategic campaigns or projects and effective use of traditional and social media marketing. Ella Sullivan (Interview, 2015) of Historic Royal Palaces spoke about the use of social media channels to raise awareness of the films in which her locations were used, when possible within the parameters of NDAs and embargoes. Once the programme is on air or the film in cinemas, the heritage location can promote themselves in association. Some houses collaborate with their larger organisations, such as the National Trust, where Edgington (Interview, 2015) often works in coordination with the film or television production

company to have marketing strategy in place and defined within in the contract. For locations repeatedly used on television in an iconic way, contracts can be renegotiated for better funding and marketing potential. Charles Berkeley (Interview, 2015), of Berkeley Castle, also advised that involvement with a film can raise awareness to corporate sponsors and financial backers of the film who may be interested in using the space for events such as corporate dinners or days out in the future. Dr Nancy Sheridan (Interview, 2015) suggested there was a disadvantage to the increase in awareness: some private houses are apprehensive about becoming a destination for film tourists as they may be family homes and owners are often anxious about security.

For many historic houses, weddings and corporate events are a major source of income. A bride and groom choosing a wedding venue are particularly influenced by the brand of the historic house, and if the historic house has been seen on screen, impacting wedding bookings. Screen publicity can also miscarry on weddings, such as when one historic house chose to give away a free wedding on a morning show for ITV and the house received cancellations from several couples who felt the location had lost its 'exclusivity' (Interview with Simon Foster, 2016). These examples illustrate how finicky the impact on branding from film and television can be on other activities at the historic house site. Overall, the narratives in film and television programmes can be a benefit to the branding strategy for the historic house, but the associations between the narrative on screen and on-site can overlap. This means there is also the potential for undesirable representations, and for this to impact the country house brand. This is where careful vetting of scripts, companies and

overall marketing and branding potential for a film should be undertaken before participation.

3.6.2 Visitor/Customer/Staff Experience

Interviewees mostly had positive engagement with filming and found it had a beneficial impact on the visitor or customer experience, as well as for the staff, management and family of the historic houses. Management utilise the imagery and narratives from the film representation at the country house site in the visitor experience. A film-related exhibition or interpretation related to film allows for a new offer on-site, and a novel visit for guests/visitors. It also solidifies the narrative of the film or television programme, and its meanings into the brand of the historic house. This is the phenomenon which will be discussed and dissected at length in the analysis chapters, where I unpick how this experience occurs and what it indicates for the meaning of the English country house myth and the individual country houses themselves. The film and television narratives and imagery nearly always give the heritage location opportunity to enhance the visitor experience on-site.

For the staff, management and owners, there are many learning opportunities associated with filming, such as continuing professional development and capacity building. According to Matti Allam (Interview, 2015), from FilmLondon, having a crew on-site often took people away from their routine duties and interrupted normal functioning, yet filming gave them an opportunity to take on new responsibilities and see the house in a new way. For Charles Berkeley (Interview, 2015), heir to Berkeley Castle, having a film crew come in and dress up

otherwise stationary rooms made him realise ‘a house comes alive and breathes a bit more when there is life in the house’. The imagination behind a film or television series gives rise to creative thinking and inspired some interviewees to use these techniques and ideas in future exhibitions and interpretations, as Charles Berkeley (Interview, 2015) also said it gives the staff ideas for ‘new ways to dress a room and make it interesting to visitors, something new’. For all the owners, managers, staff and volunteers at the historic houses, being proud of the house and sharing it with the wider public was a reoccurring theme, illustrated by Leslie Feore (Interview, 2016), General Manager at Syon House, stating, ‘Film creates a legacy for the house. We don't just let anyone come to shoot here. [It] makes you feel proud.’ When a film or television programme becomes popular, those involved felt it was a positive experience to be part of something successful and very much enjoyed the ability to share places loved and cherished with a wider audience

3.6.3 More Demand and the Cycle Starts Again

Upon returning to Sheridan’s economic cycle (Figure 3.1, p. 108) for the film and heritage relationship, the outcome of participation by historic houses in commercial film and television – the increased awareness and new visitor experiences – is that tourists create a greater demand for heritage locations on screen, and the country house continues to be a sought-after location. Working as a positive feedback loop, for most locations, positive constructive experiences with productions lead to further productions, which in turn produces a greater amount of filming income and awareness.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter contextualises the analysis and discussion of the findings in this research study. The history and myth of the country house illustrate how the meaning of the country house has been shaped, and why the concepts of conservatism, class, tradition and landscape are so closely related to the visual and narrative representations of the country house. The traditional role of the country house as a tourist, leisure site was also described, helping the reader understand the complicated history of the English country house site as a representative space for visitors to perform their identities. The history, and fictional mythic history, of the country house and its place as the repository of the cultural patrimony of England showcase the close relationship between a hegemonic view of English identity and the English country house and estate. It is this relationship between the 'authorised' hegemonic reading of heritage sites and their values (Smith, 2006) that is so valuable to the film and television productions who seek to capitalise on this ubiquitous understanding of what the country house symbolises. Utilising the country house on screen is a simple way to represent many 'English' or 'traditional' meanings on screen without a complicated explanation within the story.

The use of the country house in film is set against a backdrop of the film industry in Britain, where there is encouragement for film production companies to utilise Britain in place of locations around the world. In reality, many productions choose Britain specifically for its heritage locations and their relevance to the stories told on screen, especially historical or fantasy-related narratives. Filmmakers know utilising British heritage spaces carries a distinction inherently related to their value, and the heritage industry is understanding and

encouraging of the creative industries. The tourism industry recognises the worth of both the heritage sites and film and television to the global visitor audiences and seeks to market both individually but most successfully together. It is within this environment the country house management finds itself working most effectively with film and television productions. The management must assess the impact of the film and television productions and make choices on how to further develop relationships with production companies that is best for each individual site. While film and television productions provide many advantages for the country house, such as funding, publicity and marketing exposure, problems occur associated with screen representations.

This chapter has highlighted the historical environment of the country house and the development of its place as a symbol of English heritage, cultural patrimony, class and tradition as well as its development as a tourist destination. It has also given a background to the film industry in Britain, including why filming in Britain is so popular and successful, and how the filming process works. This is to give a background to the analysis and discussion of the data in Chapters 5 and 6. First, however, Chapter 4 will highlight the methodology of this thesis, the theory behind the methodological choices, the frameworks utilised and the reality of data collection.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this research is to understand how the English country house in screen productions impacts the design, production and presentation of the heritage visitor experience on-site. To undertake the data collection for this type of research, it is necessary to adopt a mixed-methods approach to research gathering. The research undertaken for this thesis is gathered through qualitative methods and utilises an inductive approach, wherein I continuously reassessed the data to provide further insight and understanding of the emerging patterns in the data and, ultimately, was able to draw conclusions. This study is constructivist in nature, with the philosophical beliefs underscored by the notion that reality is multiple and related to the individual and data collected is subjective, based entirely on the relationship between the researcher and the subjects involved, and what each of the individuals' previous experiences bring to the study.

The research methodology is designed to collect data that will help the researcher interpret the relationship between the production of heritage experiences at the country house site and the representation of the English country house on film and television. The chosen research methodology was designed to guide the researcher in planning the data collection in an organised way. In this study, a grounded theory methodological approach is the basis of the data collection, but utilises a mixed-methods approach, taking into account cultural

studies research methods. The grounded theory methodological approach also encompasses analysis, which is discussed in a later part of this chapter.

This chapter will discuss the theoretical issues surrounding the use of a mixed-methods qualitative approach, the implications of inductive reasoning and researcher bias, as well as the practical processes involved with the collection and analysis of the data. It will highlight the actual problems faced by the researcher, how they were rectified, and the impact setbacks had on the analysis and conclusions. Altogether, this chapter aims to help the reader understand the process by which the analysis was compiled and how the conclusions were drawn.

4.2 Research Philosophy and Paradigms

In this section I highlight the philosophies underpinning my research design. The methodological approach of my research, which will be discussed successively, develops from these philosophies. This is cultural heritage-based research, but the act of studying a cultural production relationship which is dependent on human interaction and understanding means the nature of my fieldwork is best utilised within the social science tradition, and therefore the philosophies and research methods discussed in this chapter relate to social science tradition and method.

Each philosophical approach is underpinned by a number of assumptions based around four major categories: ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological. The assumptions made in each of these categories lead the researcher into further understanding what philosophies and methods they will be following. Phillimore & Goodson

(2004a) suggest philosophies are of greater importance to modelling a study than methods. Utilising Creswell's (2012) charts, the first category of interpretive framework is the ontological beliefs, wherein the researcher's method must reflect a definition of reality (Creswell, 2012, p. 36). The epistemological beliefs centre on how this reality becomes known, while the axiological beliefs focus on the role of values in the fieldwork and research (Creswell, 2012, p. 36). Lastly, the methodological beliefs focus on the approach to enquiry, which in turn helps the researcher outline the framework of the fieldwork, the style of analysis, and the style of writing (Creswell, 2012). The research methods and framework I utilise in my fieldwork and analysis are a mixture of methods and philosophies, drawing on social science and cultural studies assumptions, beliefs and traditions. This mixed-methods approach allows the flexibility to employ a number of different methods and techniques to have the most comprehensive, thorough and compelling analysis. The unifying factor in all the aforementioned methods is the importance of qualitative research, and furthermore all of the discussed research philosophies utilise a qualitative research method as well. Qualitative research interprets 'phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them, humanizing problems' and understanding the importance of perspective (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004, p. 4). In relation to the context of heritage, Mason (2002) posits qualitative methods prove to be 'indispensable in studying the nature and interplay of heritage values' due to the usefulness of qualitative methods in studying the relationship between subjects and their environment (2002, p. 16).

In utilising Creswell's chart (2012 pp 36-37), it becomes apparent my philosophical beliefs adhere to a constructivist philosophy, which is echoed by Lincoln and Guba (2013). Lincoln

and Guba describe constructivism as 'little more than a metaphor, not for something real, but as a way of making sense of something' (2013, p. 29). This description helps to illustrate how philosophical paradigms are useful for understanding the reason a researcher uses one approach and method of analysis, while emphasising that philosophical definitions are rarely definitive. Lincoln and Guba describe the four basic philosophical questions described in relation to a constructivist approach, starting with the ontological question, stating, 'Answering the four basic questions that start with the presupposition that social reality is relative to the individual involved and to the particular context in which they find themselves.' (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 39)

Importantly, the constructivist approach is underpinned by the belief that reality is multiple and relative, and these realities are constructed through interaction with others and life experience (Creswell, 2012). Lincoln states that 'entities are matters of definition and convention', meaning that the definition and understanding of an entity, observation or emotion varies from person to person (2013, p. 39). In epistemological assumptions, the constructivist philosophy relates to subjectivity, in which the relationship between the researcher and the subject is highly personal and context-specific, and reality is 'co-constructed between the researcher and the researched' (Creswell, 2012, p. 36). Axiological beliefs, focusing on values, are individually honoured and negotiated in the constructivist philosophy, wherein 'objectivity … is rejected as a possibility when the inquirer and research participants act together to co-create knowledge and create a new, shared reality' (Guba & Lincoln, 2013, p. 41). Lastly, the methodological beliefs, which will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, round out the frameworks used for understanding philosophical

approaches. The constructivist uses an inductive method of constantly re-evaluating the findings and reassessing the correct approaches, while adding to the collected data for a more robust collection to be analysed at the end of fieldwork.

These four categories of philosophical assumptions and beliefs help to illustrate the constructivist philosophy. While discussing constructivism, Lincoln and Guba state that 'humans can never be authentically objective'; this statement emphasises the importance to constructivists that reality is unique to every individual (2013, p. 38). The constructivist belief is in direct opposition to the positivist tradition, wherein the ontological belief is in a single reality and the principle that 'true' reality can be understood through research and statistics. The positivist philosophical approach does not account for researcher bias and uses a deductive method of research wherein the researcher tests theories that have already been suggested (Creswell, 2012). Understanding constructivism becomes clearer when directly contrasted to positivism, as it becomes obvious how oppositional the two philosophies are to each other. It is essential an inductive, qualitative approach takes into account the multiple realities of all the individuals involved.

This study utilises a qualitative methodological approach, with constructivist values and philosophical assumptions, allowing for a number of methods to be utilised, all within the social science tradition, and using fieldwork techniques such as textual analysis of materials and films, observational work on example sites and semi-structured interviews. The methodological approach and fieldwork designs are discussed next.

4.3 Research Approach and Design

It is necessary to adopt a number of research methods as the subjects of this research are multiple. As I collected data on the influence of film and television representations of the English country house on the production of heritage at the country house site, I needed multiple methods and approaches to understand both the textual and the primary data collecting I utilised in my analysis. These approaches draw on the use of qualitative analysis and textual analysis to develop a greater understanding of my topic and allow the inductive nature of this study to build theories and findings 'from the bottom up'. This inductive method utilises the ability of the researcher to 'establish a comprehensive set of themes' based on continuous movement back and forth between analysis (themes) and research (Creswell, 2012, p. 45). The three major methods of data collection utilised in this study are: 1) a cultural studies research method, which is useful in understanding the production of culture (or heritage); 2) a grounded theory approach, useful for inductive research that is being constantly re-evaluated and analysed as more data is collected in a perpetually evolving pattern; and 3) a case study approach – though not utilised in the traditional sense, some aspects of the approach will be applied to site-specific work.

The research methodology takes into account the limitations placed on the fieldwork. The study focuses solely on English country houses, not including Scottish, Welsh or Irish country houses which also are part of British context. The analysis may make use of examples from other contexts in the literature, but the interviews and site visits were all made in England. The research is also set within in a period from 2015 to 2016, when the fieldwork was carried out, and from which the text-based data analysis was undertaken. Some of the

design was limited by my ability to travel around the country and the times at which I could meet country house owners and managers, visit film sets and attend events. The practicable elements of the research design were influenced by the three methods listed below, but, in an inductive approach, changed over time to fit what was deliverable.

I. Cultural Studies Research Method

One useful approach for this research comes from cultural studies and its respective methods of studying cultural production. Creating and disseminating information about the English country house, its history and meaning is firmly within the parameters of cultural production. It is useful to utilise some methods from cultural studies as they employ three distinct methods of researching and documenting cultural production. These are political economy, textual analysis and sociological/ethnographic work, which form a triangular analysis of cultural production, giving it greater diverse strength (Davis, 2008, p. 53). Understanding the political economy of the production of the promotional materials was essential to analysing the relationship between film and television and the country house site, and the political economy in which film and television programmes are produced is also relevant to the analysis of the collected data.

A textual analysis approach is useful when understanding the cultural outputs, such as brochures, guidebooks, websites and, most significantly, films, which can be analysed to add meaning to the findings of the social science qualitative approach. Textual analysis relies on understanding 'codes', which were discussed in detail in the literature review, in relation to Hall (1973), Silverman (1983), Dyer (2002) and Barthes (2009), and the importance of

understanding the way in which cultural codes influence the understanding of texts. Davis (2008) suggests it is essential to utilise the correct selection of texts, to form a broad spectrum, but makes a warning that textual analysis 'often assumes more than it should about the conditions of cultural production and consumption' (Davis, 2008, p. 58). This is why textual analysis is most useful in my research when utilised in addition to my primary fieldwork of observation and interviews.

Davis suggests that the third type of investigation of cultural production revolves around the 'broadly termed sociological/ethnographic' (Davis, 2008, p. 58). He proposes this is most often, and most successfully, carried out on the localised, micro scale, wherein the researcher has an in-depth analysis of a specific phenomenon, which can be analysed to look for themes applicable to a larger group. This observation and documentation of the actual processes of cultural production and the people involved helps illustrate the cognitive processes and social interactions which are essential for creating culture, and cultural heritage. Davis suggests the major focus with this part of the primary research fieldwork centres on finding the ideal people for interviews and observation, and the best possible locations, always aiming to give an accurate account to reflect the topic (Davis, 2008, p. 59). Davis (2008) indicates the other major issue with the sociological element of cultural studies analysis is making and maintaining connections with participants, an issue that is at the heart of most sociological studies. Without access and trust from participants, very little authentic data will be gathered. Although this research is not solely a cultural studies approach, the cultural studies approach to understanding cultural production assists in a greater understanding of the reasoning for the fieldwork.

II. Grounded Theory Research Method

Understanding emerging themes while attempting to continuously collect and analyse the data can be complicated. It is necessary to have a quality inductive method of data collection, wherein the data gathered is constantly being reassessed thematically, and the new findings applied to further data collection. As Davis (2008, p. 60) says, 'good sociological/ethnographic research regularly interrogates itself', and this is how 'grounded theory' evolved into a research approach. For the purpose of my sociological research and fieldwork, one approach I will utilise is 'grounded theory', developed by Glaser and Strauss (1968) to outline the research approach necessary for ongoing data collection and analysis simultaneously.

Charmaz (2014) further develops grounded theory into constructivist grounded theory, many elements of which are applicable to the fieldwork aspect of my research. She states, 'grounded theory models consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories "grounded" in the data themselves' (2014, p. 1). Here she illustrates the importance in grounded theory of not holding hypotheses before the start of the research; rather the research itself will form into theories as data collection and analysis confirm each other and grow. All grounded theory 'begins with inductive data, invokes iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparable methods and keeps you interacting and involved with your data and emerging analysis' (Charmaz, 2014, p. 1). This develops into constructivist grounded theory when the flexibility of the method is highlighted and 'mechanical applications of it' are avoided, meaning all aspects of grounded theory do not have to be applied, but the

general concept of grounded theory is utilised. This is pragmatic and most useful to my primary research, which drew on a mixed-methods approach to utilise a greater understanding across a broader spectrum. An important aspect of grounded theory is 'an open mind' (Charmaz, 2014, p. 4).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) define the components of grounded theory as:

- Simultaneous data collection and analysis
- Constructing analytical codes and categories
- Constant comparison
- Advancing the theoretical development at each step
- Keeping notes and memos to elaborate on codes and categories
- Samples aiming for construction of theories and not representation

Although these components are not found in every grounded theory research approach, the general substance of constant comparison and note-taking is important and essential to the approach. With the constructivist approach, 'viewing the research as consumed rather than discovered fosters researchers' reflexivity about their actions and decisions' (Charmaz, 2014, p. 13), for in constructivist grounded theory the awareness of the researcher as a subjective part of the data collection is necessary and important. For Charmaz and others (Clark, 2005), constructivist grounded theory emphasises the flexibility of the approach, and the 'research reality' of the situation 'includes what researchers and participants bring to it and do with it' (Charmaz, 2014, p. 13). Furthermore, note-taking is of high importance, wherein constant thoughts and musings about emerging theories are documented, and by

having physical records on these, the researcher can return to the notes to construct stronger theories.

Grounded theory is most appropriate for my primary fieldwork and data collection because it is a 'constellation of methods'. There are many variant ways of utilising grounded theory; all 'offer helpful strategies for collecting, managing and analysing qualitative data' and do not always have to end in a theory, but rather the observances of a number of themes (Charmaz, 2014, p. 15). Grounded theory is also widely used in tourism research, as exemplified by Goulding (2002, p. 53) wherein she explores how grounded theory allows the researcher to use 'interpretative methods' for constructing 'his/her analysis in reference to the respondents cultural orientation' and 'be sensitive to the kinds of questions asked'. She exemplifies the use of grounded theory in examples from Blists Hill and Buildwas Abbey where she explores grounded theory in relation to visitor motivations.

Specifically important to my work is the concept of positionality, wherein there is an acknowledgement of the position of the researcher. Everitt (2010, p. 162) suggests exercising 'self-awareness to avoid falling into the pitfalls of becoming a disciple of 'objective truths'' and understanding the influence of the researcher's desires and values by 'recognising it was imperative to examine our social engagements with our research subjects and understand our own corporeality'. A number of writers in tourism methodologies also reflect on the position of the researcher in Phillimore & Goodson's (2004) book *Qualitative Research in Tourism*, including Swain (2004), Hall (2004) and Thomas (2004) as well as Allan (2011), Leopold (2011) and Tantow (2011) in Hall's (2011) book *Fieldwork in Tourism.* Pertinent to my fieldwork is the concept Tantow (2011)

suggests, wherein neutral behaviour by the researcher in relation to a subject is not possible, but the researcher can be aware of biases and work to be as objective as possible. Lastly, in relation to the place of researcher and the inductive methods of grounded theory in tourism fieldwork, Jordan & Gibson (2004) discuss the development of their research over time, with research questions and recruitment of interviewees changing to align to emerging phenomena; this is highly reflective of the process of my fieldwork, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

III. Case Study Research Method

My fieldwork does not utilise a case study approach in the traditional methodology, wherein one location is utilised to illustrate broader concepts; rather, multiple small 'example locations' will be utilised to illustrate a cross-section of different possible heritage sites, or cases. The case study approach to data gathering and analysis is often utilised in tourism studies as it allows the researcher greater understanding of a specific phenomenon, utilising the case study to understand 'how the culture works' in a micro-environment (Creswell, 2012, p. 97). While certain authors (Stake, 2005) view a case study as merely the choice of what to study, Creswell (2012) views it as a methodology unto itself. Beeton (2005a) echoes Creswell's opinion and suggests that while case studies have been considered unreliable and too specific, they can illustrate phenomena in depth. For the purpose of this research, the case study will fall closer to Stake's definition, wherein the case study is more about the location of choice but will draw on some of the methodologies associated with the traditional case study method.

Case studies utilise an in-depth analysis of one specific site or phenomenon; in the case of this research, a number of sites will be analysed at a moderate level of involvement, taking into account the classic case study method of examining multiple sources of information regarding the topic. In the case of the visit to a country house, this entailed taking tours, studying signage, analysing guidebooks, evaluating print and digital marketing material as well as conducting interviews with representatives and employees of the country house. Each location site functions as a mini case study, though, unlike a traditional case study, the analysis will not centre on the findings from one in-depth study; rather, it will compare and contrast findings from multiple sites to find similar themes and utilise the grounded method to find new theories and meanings from continuous data collection and comparison.

Importantly, a case study must be 'bounded', wherein there is a definition of the boundaries of the case (Creswell, 2012). Cases happen in current real time, as anything in the past would fall under the category of historical. The cases studied in this research are all chosen based on specific criteria, which is termed 'sampling', and this sample should be meaningful to the research objectives and have a wide spectrum for comparison, without making the spectrum too broad and not allowing for the synthesis of similar themes. For the purposes of this study, 12 country houses were chosen for site visits/case examples based on set criteria, which included:

- How well known the site house was to the general public, and if the site was open to the general public
- How marketed the house was to both home and foreign tourists
- The use of the house in films and television programmes

- The associations between a famous screen/literary house and the real house
- Accessibility to the researcher
- Interest of house representatives in participating in the study

Context is an important part of a case study; the observations cannot be fully understood without a background drawn from text and previous theoretical work. Much of this is discussed in the literature review and will be utilised in the analysis to make sense of the case study reasoning and discovered themes. Creswell specifically notes the importance of the context, and 'one analytical strategy would be to identify issues within each case and then look for common themes that transcend the cases' (2012, p. 101). This is how the case study approach will improve the fieldwork in this research.

4.4 Research Objectives

The research philosophies and methodologies have been outlined above, giving the reader an idea of the aim of the fieldwork and the approach. This section outlines the concrete objectives of my research, and how the methodologies will work in the context of my fieldwork. The key aim of this research study is to explore the relationship between the screen representation of the English country house and the production and presentation of the visitor experience at the country house in England. This relationship will be explored, and then related to a number of themes prevalent in understanding the English country house concept as well as analysing the impact on national identity.

To achieve the end research aim, a number of objectives have been formulated:

- To understand the commercial and cultural significance of the English country house on film and television
- To understand how and why country house management engages with film and television productions, and what the impact of screen media experiences is on the country house site
- To break down how film and television productions capitalise on the commercial and cultural significance of the country house
- To analyse how heritage managers design, present and produce screen-related interpretation and visitor experiences
- To understand the role commercial heritage screen products and experiences, as well as tourism promotion, play in cementing the fictional narratives of film and television with the English country house and the ECH meta-narrative

Throughout the analysis chapters, these research outcomes will be referenced, and the data coded to see the emerging themes in relation to the above research outcomes.

4.5 Fieldwork and Data Collection

As outlined in the previous sections of this methodology chapter, the process of collecting data for the research study is entirely qualitative. The research methodologies I utilise include cultural studies approaches, grounded theory approaches and elements of a case study approach. The constructivist nature of the data collection recognises the relationship between the researcher – me – and the research and the way this relationship can influence the collection of data due to bias. It also means the researcher is aware of the differing

nature of reality for each subject of the study; each interviewee brings his or her own lived experience to the interview.

The aim of the collection of primary data is understanding the impact of the commercial media-produced country house on the design, presentation and production of country house heritage experiences. Using the constructivist grounded theory methodology allowed the interview questions and methodology to change as themes began to emerge from the data. Encompassing the cultural studies methodology, specifically text-based analysis of materials, both in print and online, to help support the emerging themes from the interviews allowed a broader understanding of the specific phenomenon of the country house on screen presenting at the country house on-site. The combination of different qualitative methods has allowed for a broader scope and deeper understanding of the answers to the research questions. The utilisation of elements of the case study methodology allowed me to think about each site visit in depth for a short period of time and see how the relationship worked at each country house site. This meant each site could feed back into the data collection and utilising an inductive method helped further emerging themes.

The primary research data was gathered from individual interviews with heritage managers/owners at country houses across England. This was limited to the South and Midlands as cost prohibited travel to more northern country houses, although some are utilised from literature and marketing materials. The heritage managers/owners were ones who were willing to speak with me and open their heritage spaces to me. Every attempt was made to draw the country houses from different sectors: the National Trust, English

Heritage, houses held in private trusts, family trusts and those that are still private homes opened to the public, or those used as hotels or B&Bs. Interviews were also undertaken with professionals in the film and television sector, government and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) working in the heritage sector. The observation work was undertaken at 12 houses throughout 2015 and 2016. The in-depth interviews were conducted throughout 2015 and 2016 at locations convenient to the interviewee and focused on the interviewees' experiences within the heritage sector or heritage-related film sector within the English context.

Text-based analysis was wider-ranging, as the internet makes it possible to consume and analyse marketing literature from country houses all over England, broadening the scope for analysis. Use of the inductive, constructivist approach and the methodology of grounded theory allowed the researcher to adapt the proposed project numerous times as connections were made to new individuals and new topics were introduced to the project by interviewees. The changing and adaptive nature of the fieldwork made it both challenging and rewarding and adds breadth to the analysis.

I. Preparation

In the spring of 2015, trial visits were made to two country houses to design observation checklists and processes for site visits and interviews, and see if themes could be spotted to inform interview questions. These initial visits laid the groundwork for the later visits and helped shaped the questions for interviews. Work was also done to see what type of marketing materials were available in print and online that related to the country house on

screen and country house experiences related to film and television. This included following social media pages, reading through websites, looking up events and receiving the magazines from the National Trust and English Heritage. Casual discussion was also had with individuals known to me who worked either in the sector or tangentially with the topic. This preparation work allowed for an informed start to the interviewing process and observation visits.

II. In-Depth Interviews

In the in-depth interview, the researcher is seeking to understand the 'cognitive processes and social interactions of the individuals involved' with producing culture and heritage (Davis, 2008, p. 58). In-depth dialogue with an individual produces a situation in which the conversation flows and both parties are able to talk comprehensively on the subject at hand. The interviews were chosen for this reason; I needed to be able to both interview and casually chat with a professional in the heritage sector and gather his or her ideas, observations and opinions on a number of topics related to my central research question.

These in-depth interviews were conducted with 27 individuals. The list of interviewees can be found in Appendix 1. Interviewees were heritage managers and owners of charitably owned country houses (National Trust and English Heritage), privately owned country houses, film and television tourism and promotional organisations, small businesses working in the film and television sectors, and individuals working in government for tourism agencies. The questions centred on themes including: how film and television programmes impact the country house site; the benefits and disadvantages of being in film

and working with film crews; questions on publicity, marketing and branding relating to film and television; public perception of the country house from screen representations; visitor experience and how this relates to film and television representations; and lastly a thematic question about whether using film and television on-site can blur the lines between fiction and the reality of the English country house. The example set of interview questions can be found in Appendices 2 and 2a. The first set of questions is the original, and the second set shows how the questions had altered by the final interview.

The most significant challenge of the in-depth interview was selecting participants. Finding potential interviewees and contacting them proved complicated and time-consuming, with many emails and phone calls made to set up appropriate times and places. Maintaining contact with these participants was also difficult, in that I would have a positive email conversation, which would abruptly end, and I would have to reconnect with the individual to set up the interview.

Five interviews were transcribed by and saved with the company Way With Words, and the rest were transcribed by me, utilising a recording device. An example of a transcribed interview is available in Appendix 3.

I also carried out some casual conversations with heritage managers, guides and other heritage colleagues while working on set as a project manager and conservator for Heritage4Media. This job including me being on set during filming and protecting the historic fabric of the building during film and television work and working closely with the

owners and managers of a property for positive outcomes and protected assets. This mostly occurred at Berkeley Castle and Whitminster House.

III. Observational Work

Davis (2008) highlights the importance of observational work when understanding the production of culture (and heritage) as he calls observational work the sociological/ethnographical portion of culture research. Nightingale (2008) states that observational work is an 'exchange' between the researcher and the subject(s) and produces a large amount of quality data, but she also stresses the importance of 'self-reflexivity' and understanding the place of the researcher and his or her involvement in the observation. This type of data collection is especially useful in understanding the relationship between the individuals and the site.

As observational work is inductive, focusing on the discovery and adaptation of the research method, the observational visits to the selected country houses continually helped me change and adapt my methods, as well as informed my interview questions and style. The majority of interviews were done on-site with managers and owners and this allowed me to also engage with observational analysis by reading the interpretation, taking a tour and visiting the gift shop. These are considered the official observation visits, as each visit coincides with an interview, giving greater depth to the visitor experience on-site. The set of 'official' observational visits is included in Appendix 4, and the original site checklist in Appendix 5.

Some observational work was done outside of official visits as part of my fieldwork. I regularly visit country house heritage sites with friends and family; on these visits I was able to make observations and engage with the visitor experience through interpretation, tours and browsing the gift shop. These visits are also listed in Appendix 4. Being a participant observer without engaging with the management meant I could observe how a regular tourist would experience the house and grounds, giving insight into how the country house is presenting itself.

During the period of my fieldwork, I also worked for Heritage4Media, a boutique locations service for period properties. In this work, I made visits to country houses to entice them to sign up to be part of the service; during these visits I would discuss the pros and cons of being in film and television, and the potential impacts on the heritage site. This led to observations about the perceptions of film and television engagement with individual owners, including those who had never utilised their country house on screen before. These conversations led to a new dimension of the data collection, with the constructivist grounded theory approach letting me utilise findings from these conversations in further amending the data collection processes as themes were set, emerging or disproven. As these individuals did not know me as a researcher, it is likely the thoughts shared with me had a different influence.

Lastly, I worked on set at Berkeley Castle and Whitminster House, and was able to observe the entire process of location finding to the country house being on air, while being on set during the production. As I was there in my capacity as a professional, I again was able to make observations from a different position to that of researcher, and these experiences

give depth to the understanding of the process of engaging with film, the impact on staff and management, the impact on the presentation of the heritage site in marketing materials and the overall impact on the visitor experience.

These different types of observation trips and experiences allowed me to see how visitors experienced the heritage presented to them and assess their reasons for visiting. It allowed me to understand how and why managers engage with filming and how they utilise the film and television narratives for their own purposes. Although the topic of this study is not the understanding and expectation of the film and television tourist, it is useful to observe the interaction between the site and its visitors, especially in relation to film and television, and on film-related tours.

IV. Textual Analysis

Websites, Marketing Materials, Events Promotion, Movie Maps

The analysis of cultural outputs, called textual analysis by Davis (2008), incorporates analysis of websites, brochures, physical guides, posters, panels, marketing materials and any other physical output produced by the country house heritage site or organisations working with country house sites. When analysing these texts, it is important to make use of understanding symbols, and the nature of semiotics to recognise what and why specific words, images and sentences have been chosen, and what these combinations of texts are aiming to portray. Davis states (2008, p. 57) that 'culture and language are contained in all forms of social interaction', so it is important to include a broad range of texts within the data collection and analysis.

The analysis of the texts was used in conjunction with the primary research interviews and observation work. In this way, findings from the interviews or observation can be supported or contested by the content of actual materials from the site, illuminating many of the findings from other data collection methods. All of the texts were analysed in a qualitative way, looking for meaning and understanding, rather than statistics. These materials were sampled, as it would have been impossible to scrutinise every item of text produced. The cross-section found in the analysis section is intended to illustrate the many ways country house film and television experiences are presented through textual material.

Films and Television Programmes

Textual analysis also involved analysis of the film and television programmes from which the screen representations are drawn. These media representations help form the 'screen' narrative of the country house, which is discussed in detail in the literature review, and it is this 'screen' narrative and representation that is used to understand how country house visitor experiences engage and react to these representations. Over the period of this study, I made an attempt to watch and briefly analyse as many films featuring the English country house as possible, viewing heritage 'period' dramas, contemporary scripts, and other genres of film which utilised an English country house in variant ways. Although this study does not focus on analysing films and television programmes for their general cultural impact and meaning, it does examine the representations in terms of impact on heritage production and the visitor experience at the English country house site.

4.6 Methods and Techniques of Analysis

The analysis of my data follows the constructivist grounded theory approach discussed. This approach applies to the analysis of interviews, textual material and the case study visits. The cultural studies methods Davis (2008) discusses use textual analysis and highlight the importance in understanding production of culture. The textual analysis part of the fieldwork is part of both data collection and analysis, and adds credence and meaning to the data collected in the field. Charmaz (2014) discusses the different approaches to grounded theory analysis, and summarises them into key points:

- Organising the data into schematic themes
- Continuing more research (if necessary) to prove findings
- Describing and classifying data gathered into 'codes'
- Interpreting the data and its themed codes
- Representing data and analysis textually and visually

It is easy to understand how the researcher moves from collection to analysis; it is a straightforward process. Grounded theory suggests utilising 'memo-ing', or note-taking, which involves making codes about the data that describe emerging themes, and then collecting further data to provide additional evidence to said themes. This outline informed my process of analysis in the data. I had a number of interviews, site visits and conversations which illustrated emerging themes. I coded these into concepts and used them to make my observation visits and interviews more in-depth and to the point.

Grounded theory also suggests using these codes in the analysis and the writing up of the results, which may or may not produce new theories or discoveries. The end result is not the most important part of grounded theory, making it most useful to this type of research. The interviews were analysed into a chart and then coded by letter; the interviews form the core. The textual materials, observations and casual conversations were used to highlight the themes that came out of the interviews. The case study approach suggests using the findings from the micro-site of the case and applying them to greater themes. However, in my analysis, the findings from observational work of each micro-site will be applied to the emerging themes found in the grounded theory approach to analysis and will result in a strong illustration of specific examples to solidify the themes and their resulting theories.

4.7 Ethical Issues

Denzin and Lincoln (2000), while discussing ethical codes in research, mentioned three major problematic areas: 1) informed consent; 2) confidentiality/anonymity; and 3) protection from any sort of trauma. Creswell's (2012, pp. 58–9) chart explores many possible ethical issues, and addresses the best ways to mitigate them at each stage of the process. In terms of this study, a couple of ethical issues stand out from the rest. Firstly, before embarking on any fieldwork, approval was gained from the university for all the data collection methods I planned to use, which are discussed in the above section on fieldwork. Similarly, I needed to gain permission from the people I was interested in interviewing and the sites I wanted to visit.

The major ethical issues highlighted in the application for approval were informed consent and confidentiality/anonymity. Part of the research I undertook involves observation of visitors groups to the country houses, wherein I observed their actions and listened to their conversations without their knowledge in order to collect data on how tourist-visitors react to the presentation of heritage at the country house, specifically in relation to films and programmes. Although this does present an ethical issue, the research is being undertaken in a group behaviour conduct study and the individuals will not be identified. Group behavioural observation is a common means for sociologists to understand behaviour and the individuals observed see no potential negative consequences, therefore the ethical issue was addressed.

The other major ethical issue in this study is the anonymity and confidentiality of interviewees' personal information and views. Many of the individuals I interviewed are well-known personalities in the heritage world, and their contact information is freely available online. At the same time, some of the views expressed by the interviewees may be in contradiction to their employers or reflect negatively on their organisation or the heritage site they represent. Due to the fact that the credibility of the interviewees is important to the validity of my research, I expressly asked each individual whether I could include their name in the analysis section or if they wanted to remain anonymous. As Creswell (2012) notes, it was essential not to pressure the individuals into signing the consent form, and every effort was made to ensure this did not happen. After a thorough ethical review, I was granted approval to undertake my fieldwork.

In the analysis and write-up stage, the ethical considerations revolve around falsification of data or findings, plagiarising and communication that might harm the participants, emotionally or professionally (Creswell, 2012). Every effort has been made to avoid any of these ethical problems, and a final copy of this PhD will be made available to any participants interested in obtaining one.

4.8 Limitations

There were a number of limitations to this fieldwork. These included the ability to engage with country house owners and managers; some were very keen to speak with me, while others were resistant. This means the sample of locations used may not represent the breadth of country houses in England. Some heritage managers were unused to speaking to researchers, and therefore felt overwhelmed during the conversations, while others, such as a National Trust employee, shared extensive best practice and experience with me and helped shape this fieldwork.

There was also a limitation in my ability to travel; there is a cost to travelling around England, and to travel to the far Southwest and North was too expensive. Therefore, the majority of site visits were conducted in the South, Southeast and Midlands. I also spent more time at some houses than others, where I developed a better relationship with the management or worked extensively with them on-site. At Berkeley Castle and Whitminster House I worked often on filming and became familiar with the staff, allowing me to ask more in-depth and probing questions.

The final limitation is in relation to my place as researcher. In the interviews, my interviewees understood I was the researcher and would be using the answers in my PhD thesis. This means the interviewee may not have been entirely truthful or may have used a more positive outlook on filming and their country house site. As he or she was a representative of the employer in most cases, it could reflect negatively on the employee to share problematic stories about the inner business workings of an organisation. This means some of data must be understood within the context of a researcher/interviewee relationship where I was seen as an 'outsider'.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter illustrated the methodology used in the fieldwork and data collection of this thesis. Data was gathered solely through descriptive, qualitative methods and utilised an inductive approach to the on-going data collection and analysis. I regularly assessed and reassessed the data as I was gathering it to provide further insight and understanding of the emerging patterns in the data and, ultimately, was able to draw conclusions. By regularly assessing and reassessing the data, I was able to draw out themes, which illustrated the direction the research was heading and allowed the amendment of interview questions, visits and textual analysis to further solidify the emerging themes. The study is entirely constructivist in nature, where I believed and understood that there are multiple realities and each interviewee brought their own reality, memory and personal experience to the interview. There is not one concrete reality in which the research sits. This is reflected in the process of data collection and the use of the observation work to set each interview within the context of the country house and situation where the interview was conducted.

The research methodology is designed to collect data that will help the researcher interpret the relationship between the design, presentation and production of heritage experiences at the country house site and the representation of the English country house on film and television. The research methodology was chosen to guide my fieldwork in an organised way. In this study, a grounded theory methodological approach is the basis of the data collection, especially a constructivist grounded theory methodological approach (Charmaz, 2014), which draws on the multiple realities and allows the researcher to identify themes as the research progresses. A mixed-methods approach also took into account a cultural studies methodology touching on the political economy, text-based analysis and ethnographic analysis as well as elements of a case study method for each site visit.

Chapter 4 discussed the theoretical issues surrounding the use of a mixed-methods qualitative approach, the implications of inductive reasoning and researcher bias, as well as the practical processes involved with the collection and analysis of the data. It also highlighted the ethical problems and limitations to this research, outlining how the analysis should be framed. This chapter should help the reader understand how the research was carried out, and why it was carried out this way. The following chapter, Chapter 5, seeks to explore how country house management reacts to the English country house on film in relation to designing, producing and presenting the country house as a visitor experience. Both Chapter 5 and 6 will explore, discuss and analyse the outcomes and impacts of this relationship between the country house site, the country house on film and the English country house in popular culture. This will be done firstly through a discussion of the interviews, delving into the relationship between heritage producers, imagery and

narratives and film and television producers, followed by analysis of material culture related to the country house on screen and what this means for the country house myth.

CHAPTER 5

THE ENGLISH COUNTRY HOUSE META-NARRATIVE AND THE ENGLISH COUNTRY HOUSE ON SCREEN: NAVIGATING THE SPACE BETWEEN THE COUNTRY HOUSE ON SCREEN, THE REAL COUNTRY HOUSE AND THE COUNTRY HOUSE MYTH

5.1 Introduction

Having contextualised the literature surrounding my research, the methodology and the cultural, economic and political context of the fieldwork, this chapter will analyse and interpret the motivations of country houses for engaging with commercial screen productions and dissect the power narratives in the relationship between historic country house sites and screen media productions. At the start, this chapter outlines the impact of my position as a researcher within the context of the interviews, and how the content of the interviews may be misleading due to the relationship between interviewer and interviewee.

The chapter will then introduce the English Country House (ECH) meta-narrative, a key concept I have developed to understand the overarching popular culture myth of the country house and the impact it has on the English country house on screen and each individual country house site. The ECH meta-narrative proposes the English country house in popular culture is a representation of the English Country House myths and its values and associated concepts, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. This ECH meta-narrative is developed through repetition in popular culture mediums, and when the country house appears on screen it represents this ECH meta-narrative due to its commercial and cultural value. Every individual country house is then amalgamated into this ECH meta-narrative, where each

popular culture iteration impacts each individual house because they can be understood as interchangeable. This ECH meta-narrative theory informs my analysis of the interviews in relation to the power narratives between the heritage site and the screen production company, as well as analysing the material culture surrounding the use of screen imagery and narratives within the visitor experience of the country house site.

This chapter will then use an analysis of the fieldwork interviews to illustrate that the key motivation for heritage managers to engage with filming and television location work is the economic and commercial impact on the site, in the form of location fees. Filming and location work also further expand opportunities for income generation for the country house through publicity, marketing and commercial enterprise in relation to visitor-consumers. Outlining how each party within the relationship benefits (the heritage site, the screen producers and the ECH meta-narrative) will allow a deeper understanding of the interplay of this relationship.

After this discussion on motivations for engagement with commercial screen productions, Chapter 5 will go on to dissect the power narratives between the heritage management teams and the screen producers. The analysis will illustrate why heritage managers are compelled to engage with screen productions and what this means for their own site narratives. Film and television bring income and publicity to the country house site, but this income is so necessary, the heritage managers have little choice but to engage with film and television production. I argue this can be seen as giving up power to the commercial screen producers, as once they are utilising the country house imagery and location, the narratives they produce reach far larger audiences and are consumed more often than anything

produced by the heritage managers themselves. The cultural producers, creating the film and television narratives, drive the stories of the individual country house as well as the continuing formation and re-formation of the ECH meta-narrative. Interview answers are utilised to dissect the power narratives and reflect how heritage managers react within them.

Finally, the chapter will explore the connections between the real country house and its screen representation, and how the type of representation and its success impact on the connection between the country house and the screen. Consumers are used to understanding the country house through popular culture, and the way the country house appears in popular culture impacts on the connection between the real and fictional. Throughout the chapter, the key theory of the ECH meta-narrative illuminates how screen representations of one country house with a fictional narrative can impact all English country houses, and how the 'control' of the country house narrative has been dispersed across popular culture, rather than solely in the control of the heritage owners and managers themselves.

5.2 Potentially False Positive Attitudes: Interviewees and My Place as a Researcher

When analysing the results of interviews with country house staff, the answers supplied must be contextualised in relation to my position as a student researcher and outsider to the management structure of each country house. As the country houses are owned both through charitable organisations and privately, the rapport developed with each interviewee was different. The interviewees were ambassadors for their organisations and

historic houses; therefore, they have a prerogative to present an optimistic viewpoint on their work with screen productions to an 'outsider'. I found this to be the case in every interview I undertook with historic house heritage managers. The more candid thoughts and observations came from the casual interviews that took place in three situations: on-site while in my job working with historic houses; with senior, nationally based National Trust employees; and those running independent consultancy services. All of these interviewees did not have to worry about job security in speaking with me. Despite the fact that some questions were specifically designed to elicit thoughts on problematic aspects of the relationships with film and television productions, such as difficult representations or historic conservation worries, the interviewees all related their experiences with commercial screen productions to me in a positive way. Interviewees highlighted the mitigation procedures in place to deal with all problematic outcomes from working with screen productions (see Appendix 2a and 2b for interview questions).

Discussion on undesirable outcomes for the historic house with heritage manager interviewees focused on practical impacts such as funding shortages, conservation worries and damage to the historic house or landscape, rather than on publicity, marketing or branding worries – essentially the narrative and representation of their country house. Questions such as "Have you had any negative experiences with the representation of any heritage sites on screen?" were answered with positive responses, as exemplified by the response from Roland Brown, Estate Manager at Berkeley Castle:

> *Not in terms of representations of the Castle, we haven't had experiences once something's gone out. The actual filming days are challenging, and the key is*

trying to manage it. Someone who's seen that the Castle is usually open on the Tuesday, [visiting] from Yorkshire, and they are disgruntled, and it's closed for filming. So, what we try and do is negotiate … and what we find is the concern that the visitor feels they are short-changed, but they love it, they love seeing cameras.

This quotation illustrates how a question from me as interviewer on the challenging outcomes from working with film and television production can be turned into a chance to discuss positive mitigation structures for the country house. Problems produce solutions which work for the heritage manager; the benefits of working with film and television productions always outweighed the costs for the heritage managers. This attitude is likely a consequence of my position as 'outsider', wherein the employee heritage manager felt it imperative to produce a good discussion and analysis of the individual country house's relationship with film and television. In business, it always serves to be prudent with potentially damaging information. As historic houses and heritage sites are under constant scrutiny to justify their existence and benefits, including grant funding and taxation relief, it follows that the representatives of such sites would always be on guard against an appearance of negativity towards themselves, even when speaking to a seemingly harmless student researcher. The lack of candidness in the formal interviews may impact the overall findings within this chapter and this thesis.

A number of interviewees (please see Appendix 1) could be described as mid-level employees in their organisation; many of the interviewees had the role of liaising and coordinating with film and television productions. As these individuals were comfortable

disclosing their names in this thesis, it is likely that they would not divulge problematic or controversial experiences or observations. I suggest interviewees expressed the position of the organisation for which they worked; a controversial opinion could have put their job in jeopardy. Although I would argue some interviewees gave more thoughtful answers and expressed subtle hints to their personal opinions through both speech and body language, the overwhelming feeling I received from every interview was a positive viewpoint for historic country houses working with film and media. The attitude of the country house representatives exemplifies the important financial position of commercial film production to the country house; even potentially negative impacts on visitors and heritage conservation were outweighed by the enriching experience of being a screen media location.

The discussions between myself and the interviewees also took the tone of a sales pitch; I often felt the interviewee was 'selling' the experience to me, despite my position as a neutral researcher. For instance, Lucy Abraham (Interview, 2015), Assistant Visitor Experience Manager at Ham House, said, 'No publicity is bad publicity', and this sentiment was echoed by other interviewees. I argue that there are some types of publicity that *can* be problematic; this quotation is a trope often used in business for public relations, and Abraham's and others' use of it in interviews illustrates their 'sales-pitch' nature. As the English country house experience has been and is currently commoditised, the commercial success of the house and estate is essential to its survival. The commercial success is a way of legitimising the continued presence of the country house, and all it represents, within the changing landscape of society in the twenty-first century (Ashworth, 2009). Thus, the

management of the country house must participate in the commercialisation of the country house and its presentation, and the only way to placate this profit-orientated business plan with the cultural meaning of the country house is to convince oneself that the media experience is both necessary and beneficial, hence their 'selling' it to me as outsider and to themselves as enablers of screen representations and film location experiences.

5.3 The English Country House Meta-Narrative

The literature review and context chapters charted the development of an English country house myth through its historical cultural creation, highlighting both the cultural observations and theoretical narratives about what the English country house means, represents and signifies. The English country house has come to represent certain values and concepts with both its image and its narrative. Importantly, Smith (2006) suggests the 'authorised' hegemonic reading of heritage sites and their values, in this case of the English country house and its myth, is never inherent; visitors, writers, journalists and historians imbue the places and their imagery with meaning. There is no intrinsic meaning or value within a building; value is created by the users and observers. The country house imagery, and its myth, embodies the 'generic' country house of England represented in media, tourist propaganda and the minds of visitors.

Here I introduce the theory of the English country house meta-narrative. This proposes that the English Country House (ECH) is an archetypal convention of popular culture, and the depiction of the ECH is repeated over and over with the same values and associated meanings, creating the ECH myth. The archetypal English Country House of the myth is not

the same as an individual country house in England, or the factual history of country houses in England. The ECH meta-narrative is underpinned by the greater popular culture myth of the English country house, which is symbolised in literature, on television, in films and through user-generated content (the work of fans). The repetitious appearance of the ECH on screen and popular culture solidifies the archetypal meaning of the country house in the minds of the consumer. Because of the prevalence of the ECH on screen, the myth is synonymous with the image of the country house, which I argue becomes synonymous with all of the country houses in England. On screen, each individual country house site may play any number of country houses or parts of country houses – the real country houses are interchangeable, and all are the English Country House. The constant presentation and reformation of the ECH meta-narrative in popular culture means its meanings, values and concepts impact all country house sites; all country house sites are part of the ECH meta-narrative.

Barthes (2009) theorised the repetition of symbols and their associated meanings created a 'new mythology' through this constant repetition and exposure. The visual images begin to signify the meanings and connotations they are portraying, thereby creating myths (or stories) in relation to an image or object. The English country house on screen embodies the ECH meta-narrative; its repetition in presentation across film and television means the associated values and meanings signified by the narratives on screen become associated with the English country house. The ECH meta-narrative is an amalgamation of what the consumer is told the country house represents; it can also represent the meaning the

consumer projects onto the image of the English country house through personal experiences and learned history and cultural socialisation.

This ECH meta-narrative is repeated through fictional narratives on screen, so the imagery of the country house embodies the associated concepts and values. The fictional narratives on screen then add to the ECH myth and narrative, further changing and altering the ECH meta-narrative. ECH meta-narrative concepts become intrinsically linked to the visual English country house representation and the consumer no longer understands the two entities as separate. Interviews and observation suggest to me the symbolic ECH is synonymous with the generic real English country house, and synonymous with each individual country house site. The real historic English country house site and the ECH myth become interchangeable, understood as one by the consumer, and sometimes presented as one by the managers. This is the ECH meta-narrative.

These screen representations of the ECH are also consumed in the intimate space of the viewers' homes and lives, making them very immediate to the consumer. The viewer also brings his or her own experiences and understandings of the English Country House to the consumption of the screen narrative; this is each viewer/visitor's personal English Country House narrative.

5.3.1 The Values of the English Country House Meta-Narrative

Values and concepts associated with the ECH meta-narrative have become inherent to the visual representation of the country house in imagery, or the use of the country house in narrative. Viewers of screen representations are 'assaulted' by the images of the country

house on screen, and the image and description of the country house begins to embody the values of the ECH meta-narrative. The concepts were outlined in depth in the literature review, and include:

- preservation of traditions and the traditional way of life
- the maintenance of the social class structure
- the taming of a wild landscape
- a propensity for conservative nostalgia for the 'better days' of times past
- the power and wealth of those who own the land and the cultural patrimony
- the country house as a symbol of Englishness and 'there will always be England'

The chosen narrative mechanism of the twenty-first century is film and television. On screen, all country houses are consumed as one great English Country House and the ECH on screen informs the audience of the intended meaning behind the narrative of the film or television programme. There is a reciprocity between how the ECH meta-narrative informs the screen narrative, and how the screen narrative informs and further advances the ECH meta-narrative. Both influence each other continually in a cyclical way; the English country house is used within a screen narrative to signify some or all of the values of the ECH meta-narrative, and then the screen narrative may change or enhance the associated meanings of the ECH meta-narrative. The new mythology of the ECH meta-narrative is constantly changing and adjusting to the new representations and narratives of popular culture. The ECH meta-narrative is not stagnant and reflects popular opinions, politics, economics and social influences of the time period.

5.4 Money is Everything: The Financial Basis of the Production Company/Country House Relationship

I utilised Sheridan's (2013a) work in the context chapter to illustrate the relationship between heritage sites and commercial screen media. She hypothesises the relationship is related to the financial benefit to both parties involved. The economic driver to form productive relationships between the country house and the screen production companies forms when both parties receive a financial benefit from working together. Sheridan suggests the value of the country house lies in its cultural and commercial value for consumption; this cultural and commercial value is the value of the ECH meta-narrative, and each country house is standing in for the ECH meta-narrative on screen. The reciprocal relationship works around values – for the production, it needs the ECH meta-narrative represented on screen, likely by one or more real country house locations. This is essential to the success of the costume drama or other screen production, as the illusion of authenticity of the country house is vital to the success of utilising the ECH meta-narrative. The country house site requires the income from filming and television to continue to be structurally sound and financially viable. The country house receives the direct financial impact from the location fees for use, but also receives extended benefit from increased publicity and visitors, and therefore visitor spend. The individual, physical country house site most always serves only as a stand-in for the archetypal English Country House and is therefore representing the ECH meta-narrative.

The consensus within the industry is that the most obvious benefits of working with filmmakers is the location fee the country house receives; this was discussed at length in the

context chapter. The interviews echo this consensus, and this section will explore the commercial relationship between the country houses and screen production companies. This reflexive commercial benefit to both house and screen production illustrates the reasoning for continuing a relationship between the two entities. Interviewees were asked to name the greatest benefit to the country house heritage site from working relationships with screen productions. Across the responses, the direct financial benefit of location fees, then subsequent commercial potential, was the quickest, most common response. The longer-term commercial benefit for the country house from increased publicity and visitor numbers is directly related to the value of the ECH meta-narrative, wherein the meta-narrative interplays with the representation of the individual country house on screen and film tourists' expectations. Stephen Badham (Interview, 2015) of Creative England said the filming was good because 'financial benefits, of course, the fee for production. Promotion afterwards is also a useful tool.' While Simon Foster (Interview, 2016), Director of the Commercial Heritage Consultancy at Savills, expressed it most bluntly when he said, 'Frankly, my clients are turned on by money.'

A key theme of the discussions with interviewees about their expectations of participation in commercial film and television location work was the desperate need for funding to maintain the country house historic fabric and the business of running the country house as an experience, as highlighted in Chapter 4. Lucy Abraham (Interview, 2015), at Ham House, said, 'Income goes straight to conservation. It has to be managed but it is worthwhile,' while Robert Floyd (Interview, 2015), owner of Great Chalfield Manor, said, 'It's a good stream of income that can be very substantial.' In working on set with a diverse range of country

house owners and managers, I have also found this is a key driver behind the relationship with film production; as a consultant with Savills Commercial Heritage Consultancy I continue to see this trend with most properties with which I work. Notably, within the greater heritage sector there is a continuous insufficiency of funding, and this is a problem faced by all heritage managers as government support, grants and charitable funding are becoming less available. Lastly, the lack of funding for maintenance and repairs is coupled with the extensive choice of leisure activities for the consumer (Hughes & Carlsen, 2010), where historic houses and estates must compete with leisure experiences that have a far larger commercial reach and financial backing. The publicity from being represented in film and television can move a historic country house property from being relatively unknown and facing big competition to front of the pack through mass representation on screen.

The basis for the country house/screen media relationship is probably best described by interviewee Harvey Edgington, Head of Filming and Locations at the National Trust: 'And what we need is the money.' This section of Chapter 5 will review the country house as a commercial commodity and explore the impact this has on the commercial position of the country house today, and then outline in greater detail the commercial relationship between the house and the screen production company and how this relates to the creation of value.

5.4.1 The Commercial Country House: A Relationship to History

Although the commercial element of the relationship between the English country house and the screen productions has a distinctly modern feel, the ECH meta-narrative and

individual country houses themselves are and have always been commercial entities that survive and prosper because they are adaptable to the economic and cultural climate of the decade or century. The country house was designed to give visitors visual clues to the wealth, power and cultural property of the owner. The appearance of the country house landscape stems from centuries of commercial purposes imposed on the land: farming and land management, both commercial and ornamental gardening which reflected the cultural and artistic sensibilities of the time period, and industrialisation, which meant more money to spend on land improvements and management as well as the handover of traditional rural properties to industries, factories and mills. With the advent of the country house becoming a heritage site, rather than a home, contemporary visitors and observers have given the country house value as a historical object and emblem of the past; however, this heritage-making can disregard the very real commercial beginnings of the building, and frequent rebuilding, of the country house landscape.

In the screen-dominated twenty-first century, the country house has merely adapted to fit these needs of cinema and television. Interviewee Harvey Edgington (Interview, 2015) discussed with me how having a film or television programme utilise a country house site is comparable to the way 'Capability Brown branded a garden, or so and so designed my house. People do forget that these houses were lived in.' The English Country House is often valued as a beacon of tradition, heritage and cultural patrimony within its authorised reading (Smith, 2009), but in each decade the country house responds to the cultural zeitgeist of its era. Essentially, each country house has developed as a brand throughout its history, and through the development choices of its managers has become what we now

understand it to be. It is important to remember the country house has always been commercial and a brand representing the owners. For Edgington, having a film crew represent the house on screen in the twenty-first century equates to inviting Capability Brown to remodel the landscape in the eighteenth.

Therefore, the commercialisation of the country house in film and the utilisation of the ECH meta-narrative on screen is merely continuing the tradition of the country house as a commercial space. Heritage producers and managers emulate their predecessors in utilising commercial methods to keep a country house and estate running and producing employment within the local community. Modern country house managers are continuing the commitment of many landed gentry and aristocracy who once inhabited the country house in exploring new avenues for income generation, such as participating in screen productions, which is the optimum avenue for income generation and publicity in this century. Even without the film and television narratives, the country house utilises elements of the ECH meta-narrative to increase commercial abilities. For example, figure 5.1 shows the gift shop at Kenwood House, an English Heritage Georgian country villa in North London, utilising the narratives of the ECH meta-narrative, such as class, aristocracy and tradition, through decorative arts in the country house to sell homeware. The engagement with film and television is just another avenue for the country house manager to create income and commercial opportunities to increase the success of the country house within the leisure market.

Image 5.1 Selling Kenwood House-inspired decorative commercial goods
Kenwood House gift shop, 10 November 2014
(Photograph by author)

The problematising of the commercial activities at the English country house site, as critiqued by a number of observers and academics and outlined in the literature review, redefines the country house as museum-like heritage rather than working spaces at the centre of communities, and therefore separates country houses from their veritable history. The heritage producers interviewed for this thesis were aware of their own position as a commercial entity and their position as the trustees of the house and estate to be passed on to future generations; it is often the critics and theorists creating the negative presentation

on the commercialisation of history and heritage. Simon Foster (Interview, 2016) tells us, 'The more interesting story is what these owners are doing in entrepreneurial business ways, they aren't your stereotypical fuddy-duddy in a tweed jacket.'

5.4.2 *The Commercial Relationship Between the Country House and the Production Company: A Financial Transaction*

I. How Screen Productions Benefit

The relationship between the English country house and the commercial film and television production is, at its heart, a financial transaction. The film or television production company seeks the value of the ECH image which represents the ECH meta-narrative and all of its associated concepts. The English country house imagery, representing the tropes of the ECH meta-narrative, is popular on screen and translates into big viewer numbers and financial success. An example of the popularity of the country house on screen is encapsulated by *Downton Abbey* (2010–15), with an estimated global audience of over 120 million people (Cuccinello, 2016). Additionally, the UK tax incentives discussed in the context chapter encourage utilising the British heritage stories within the narrative, which lowers the overall cost of production. The favourable outcomes in utilising the ECH meta-narrative and individual country houses in Britain outweigh the problems potentially faced by productions of filming abroad in England or of using a real country house in place of a studio sound stage.

The country house holds a value, both cultural and commercial, for the screen production. As has been outlined, the concepts associated with the representation hold this value and

have been moulded over years of commercial activity at the country house site as well as the popularity of consuming the ECH meta-narrative. As Monk (2012) described, audiences enjoy seeing the country house on screen; it has a draw for cinema audiences based on its meaning in popular culture. As it is most often utilised in heritage costume dramas, which have proven highly popular time and time again, the country house has a commercial value when utilised on screen and screen productions seek to capitalise on this. Consumers like seeing country houses and costume dramas, but most importantly will pay to see narratives in this setting. Furthermore, as developed in the literature review, audiences hold the cultural knowledge of what the country house represents: tradition, safety, class, nostalgia, landscape and the myth of 'old England'. The country house image narrates these concepts to audiences in a visual landscape.

II. How Heritage Sites Benefit

The individual country houses receive both direct and indirect financial benefit in being utilised for film and television programmes. The direct financial transaction occurs when the production company pays a fee for the use of the buildings or land on the country house estate; this funding goes directly into the income of the country house and was described in the context chapter. The indirect financial benefits originate from the relationship between the country house site and its representation on screen, and the relationship to the ECH meta-narrative. Being represented in commercial screen productions allows the country house to be seen by a vast audience, many of whom may not engage with the marketing of the country house through traditional means. This results in increased publicity potential, which can be capitalised on by successful marketing and communications; creating a bigger

publicity outcome and connections for visitors and viewers between the representation on screen and the visitor experience on-site. This development is most successful when a film is successful, or the house has major screen time.

This increased publicity often leads to increased visitor engagements, corporate events and weddings, or increased visitor spend on experiences or commercial products. To reiterate some of the information related in Chapter 4, Stephanie Cliffe of Chatsworth House felt publicity was the biggest benefit to the country house from screen productions, and Anna McEvoy of the Stowe House Preservation Trust stated wedding enquiries had come directly out of film representation and associated publicity. If a country house attracts high visitor numbers and profitable events and experiences, it can continue its economic independence and do more commercial development. For some of the private house owners interviewed, their main goals are to be commercially successful, to maintain the integrity of the house and estate and support the local community. For the National Trust, filming is a key way to bring commercial prosperity to their neighbouring communities. Heritage spaces, such as country houses, and the heritage industry must continuously justify the support of the government policy by proving their popularity, use and success. The easiest way is to show the use by communities and the simplest means of justification is through economic sustainability. In the austerity climate, and with government funding always decreasing, financial justification lies at the heart of a heritage site and its management plan.

III. The Importance of the ECH Meta-Narrative in the Economic Relationship

The relationship between the country house site and the screen production is essentially economic, but is very reliant on the *commercial value* of the ECH meta-narrative. With the continued popularity of costume dramas and their need for the country house representations and locations, the ECH meta-narrative will continue to have a representative cultural and economic value, and only grow in meaning as it is used and associated with further screen narratives. As Sargent (2000) suggested, costume dramas are a key driver in the growth of the commercialisation of the heritage sector, and these costume dramas are the means of dissemination of the country house image. Therefore, the value of the costume drama translates into the value of the country house site, making this relationship highly mutually beneficial. Country house owners and managers want to make the most of this economic value and translate it into concrete viability for their site. When undertaking analysis of the relationship between screen productions, screen representations and the country house site, it is important to remember the relationship formed around a mutually advantageous economic relationship in relation to the value of the ECH meta-narrative.

The challenge for the country house manager is to make the real country house more valuable to the screen production company than creating the country house in a studio. As the ECH meta-narrative carries such a strong meaning, a reproduction of the country house could convey the same meaning as a real country house, especially on screen. For the relationship to be viable, real country houses must be used. This challenge means the country house staff are in a position where their power in the relationship is less than that of the screen production. The screen production staff are the decision-makers in using real

country houses or reproductions, as the financial benefit to them could arguably be the same. Therefore, the country house manager must make the decision to appear more valuable to production staff in order to attract the filming and retain most of the economic benefits. I would argue, though, that in terms of the ECH meta-narrative, it is more valuable for screen producers to use real country houses that can be identified as being located in England and possibly visit-able, as this is a better representation of the ECH meta-narrative and its value. Otherwise, arguably, the relationship of economic value is between the ECH meta-narrative, its representation and the screen production, rather than the real country house site. Through this lens, the screen production emerges as the main driver in the development of the ECH meta-narrative, and the real country house site appears as the failure in the division of power.

5.5 Owning the Narrative: The Country House, Its Representation and the Meta-Narrative

Out of the analysis of the commercial relationship between the country house site and its management with the screen production companies and screen imagery and narratives, comes the focus on the importance of commercial and cultural value. The screen production company, creating the new imagery and narrative on screen, emerges as the main driver behind the further creation of meaning for the ECH meta-narrative, and therefore the impact of screen representations on each individual country house site. The need and desire for funding for the individual country house site, through location fees and the possibility of further publicity and marketing, means they continue to participate in film and television productions, while the zeal for nostalgia, in which the country house no longer signifies financial wealth and economic power, but a ‘rose-tinted’ view of the past and the people

who inhabited this nostalgic world of the country house, continues its popularity. Narrated through historical fiction, art and costume-drama film and television productions, the ECH meta-narrative has rewritten the meaning of the country house from an emblem of wealth, power and land stewardship to a modern nostalgic and romantic interpretation of the past. Therefore, the meaning of the ECH meta-narrative, and the individual country house, is represented by the choices of screen producers, who are interested in viewer numbers and income, not historical accuracy. As the ECH meta-narrative is so valuable to the screen production, and across popular culture mediums, the narrative of the country house is repeated often. The screen representations of the country house have a greater influence than the country house itself.

As the narrative of the country house is disseminated through screen representations, written and produced by those outside of the heritage sector, the country house management has less control over their own narrative and brand, and this is problematic for marketing and management teams trying to interpret and create a visitor experience brand for an individual country house. The choice for management then becomes how the country house utilises the tools that are available to take back some jurisdiction over the narrative of each country house site. The loss of control over the individual brand narrative links into commercial issues, wherein management cannot control the stories and branding which would grow the income of the site and the awareness of the brand. Through the representation on screen, the individual country house, as well as the ECH meta-narrative, become aligned to the values and stories of the commercial screen production. There are a number of outcomes to this ‘loss of control’ and ‘loss of traditional power’ over the country

house narrative, with implications not only for the practical running of the country house heritage site but also for the traditional power of social class and its association with the country house.

5.5.1 Traditional Power Narratives of the Country House

It could be argued that historically the owner of the country house controlled the narrative of the site through the design of architecture, garden and landscape, interior decoration, and choice of public awareness of the house and its habitants. These choices were often made to reflect the story the owner of the house wanted to tell outsiders about their wealth, power, taste, class, or any number of personal qualities. Tinniswood (1998) writes at length about the different country house owners and the way they decorated their homes, as seen by the tourists who visited. These personal branding choices all played a part in creating the larger cultural meaning associated with the English Country House.

It would be short-sighted to think country house owners truly owned the country house narrative at any point throughout history. Owners of country houses could present them to the public through one lens, but those viewing the country house from outside and interpreting its meaning into popular culture have influenced the ECH meta-narrative and the country houses themselves just as strongly. Writers, artists, social commentators and tourists have all manipulated how the country house is understood and interpreted in popular culture. This is the argument of the ECH meta-narrative, wherein the meaning of the country house is an amalgamation of all the country houses and the representation of its values in popular culture over centuries. When thinking about the power and ownership

over the narrative of the greater ECH meta-narrative or an individual country house, it is essential to remember the constantly changing meaning of country houses throughout history and across popular culture, and the ownership of the narrative of a country house was never solely in the hands of the owner.

In making these observations, it also appears that very few interviewees were able to touch on the lack of agency they held in their own narratives. The general managers and estate owners felt they controlled their house and estate, and how the public viewed and interacted within it. This is a comfortable position for the heritage manager to see themselves in; it would be far more uncomfortable to see oneself as lacking agency within the workplace. The positive outlook of the interviewees also relates to the bias towards the researcher, the presentation of positivity to outsiders, which was discussed at the start of the chapter. Some interviewees, notably mostly those within the heritage field not acting as steward or manager for any one house, such as Dr Nancy Sheridan, who ran her own media-liaison heritage company, and Harvey Edgington, one of the experts on the country house on screen leading the National Trust department, were more frank in their discussion; both Nancy Sheridan and Harvey Edgington discussed the negative impacts of screen representations. It is imperative to take the position of interviewees into consideration when analysing results; the lower-level employees who were interviewed would not have the confidence or potentially the job security to speak so frankly with me.

As discussed, the reason the country house engages with filming is an economic one, therefore the critical reason the ownership of the narrative passes out of the sole control of country house management is the need to increase economic foundations. By choosing to

engage with modern commercial methods of income generation, such as film production, it becomes imperative for the organisation to continue to engage in this income generation. With this need for financial security, the level of importance placed on controlling the narrative or story of the country house, which represents the country house's brand, becomes secondary to income. Although blame can be placed on the production company as the means by which the power is taken away from the country house managers and through which the ECH meta-narrative of popular culture is developed, the need for economic stability is the real driver behind engaging with commercial output at the country house site.

5.5.2 A Democratisation of the Country House Narrative?

I would argue the loss of control over the narrative of a country house by its management represents a democratisation of the meaning and interpretation of the English Country House. Traditionally, the country house was culturally unavailable to a large section of the population who did not have the economic, class or cultural means to engage directly with the country house. The representations of the English Country House might appear in newspapers or popular art, but the country house was made to be interpreted by those who had access to the education to understand it. Subsequently, as Tinniswood (1998) illustrates, the country house visitor was still a person of educated status who understood the cultural and historical associations of the country house. With the advent of television, the access to many cultural and historical narratives was more widely available and the use of the country house in popular culture allows more viewers to engage with the country house space. This consumption of country house narratives by the public, perhaps more

than the creation of the screen country house narratives by producers, is where the power of control over the narrative is taken away from the country house management. These consumers, who decide what they want to see on television with the power of their pounds, become the visitors to the country house space. The consumers bring their own conceptions and experiences to understanding the narratives, and thus their views of the country house itself.

Yet, the country house representation and narrative, as well as the country house itself, can only be democratised as far as the screen narrative allows, which is still based on the commercial value of the ECH meta-narrative. The screen narratives are filtered through commercial objectives, and these commercial objectives tend to favour the stereotypical representations of power and wealth at the country house which are found in the ECH meta-narrative. The representations on screen, when repeated and widely consumed, impact the ECH meta-narrative, and the inherent associated concepts of the country house. This in turn can impact the country house heritage sites, as the ECH meta-narrative develops in the minds of the consumer and visitors. As all individual country houses become part of the ECH meta-narrative through the amalgamation on screen, they are all part of the screen representations and viewers' reactions to them, again surrendering power from the heritage managers to both the screen production and the consumers. As the representations on screen change the narrative of the real historic house by either creating new elements of the narrative of that individual country house or reasserting the stereotypes of the ECH meta-narrative, there is a renegotiation of the branding narrative of the individual country house with its representations. When the screen production airs and

the narrative or imagery from the fictional narrative becomes associated to the real house, the country house management must make a decision about control and ownership over the changing narrative of their site, and the interplay of their brand with screen representations and the ECH meta-narrative. Consumers will interact with a country house heritage site through a lens impacted by the screen narratives; as Harvey Edgington (Interview, 2015) said, the screen narrative 'becomes part of the history of the house'.

5.5.3 Heritage Managers and Reactions to Controlling Their Narrative

Only some heritage managers interviewed recognised the loss of control over their own narrative, though certain statements speak to an awareness of the problems with filming but recognise the positive benefits always outweigh the disadvantages. Some interviewees, such as Roland Brown (Interview, 2015), Estate Manager at Berkeley Castle, felt 'dramas' (film or television programmes) were always worth the hassle they caused, while Simon Foster (Interview, 2016), Director of the Commercial Heritage Consultancy at Savills, advises clients that the decision to participate in a filming project can be a very savvy business plan, and can 'open doors to creating a public face'. Nick Way (Interview, 2016), former Director General of the Historic Houses Association, asked, 'Should you take on a film that is about slavery and murders by toffs, which might impact the reputation of the house? If it's a good director, you will probably be okay.' He illustrates the questions owners are asking of themselves, recognising the impact of the screen narrative on the brand of each country house and the choice to engage with the production in the end.

Only in a few interviews did the interviewee touch on the subject of losing control over their own narrative. Tony Berry (Interview, 2015), Visitor Experience Manager for the National Trust, felt that 'to a certain extent, when you are a location you are not exercising creative control … but it's not for us to edit the script.' To the heritage manager, the opportunity to engage with new means of financial independence and new commercial value is an opportunity to take, as detailed by both Nancy Sheridan and Jamie Campbell (Interviews, 2016), of Heritage4Media. In their experience of working with independent country houses, most owners and managers were more than keen to engage with filming opportunities and were not concerned with a loss of ownership over their own narratives.

As has been outlined, the country house heritage site, as all heritage organisations, must always validate their continued support from government and public funders in modern Britain. The easiest way to demonstrate value to the public is through economic success, and the relationship with screen productions adds an additional commercial value to the country house. The problematic situation of giving up some control over the narrative of the country house site by a heritage manager is relatively small in comparison to the possible economic failure of the country house as a business or the failure of a charitably run site to prove public use, engagement and commercial viability. The screen representations and narratives, as Simon Foster (Interview, 2016) suggested, open up a range of possibilities to increasing profit margins and showing economic viability and help both private and publicly owned country houses to demonstrate these abilities. Many of the discussions with heritage managers I undertook, both in interview and casually during on-site visits or on set, demonstrated the immense pragmatism of their outlooks. In a competitive leisure market,

and even a competitive heritage market, appearing in a screen narrative opened up more possibilities than it created problems. Nick Way (Interview, 2016), former Director General of the Historic Houses Association, felt the houses would 'gain through giving some control away', but did acknowledge that the houses 'are relinquishing some of your ownership when you have a film in'. For most heritage managers interviewed, the benefits always outweighed the costs when it came to work with screen productions, except in a few specific ways that will be discussed. When analysing why the interviewees expressed such positive and pragmatic attitudes towards giving up control over their own narrative, it is important to remember the place of the interviewee within the corporate or charitable organisation's hierarchy, wherein the interviewee may not have felt at liberty to discuss such topics honestly with me. It is also imperative to be cognizant of the situation of all country houses in their need to be economically sustainable and engage with commercial income generation. As the country house must be financially stable, and filming can provide an element of this stability, it is beneficial to the heritage manager to think positively about screen opportunities. It is necessary to read between the lines when analysing the interviews and casual conversations which have informed this analysis and understand that there are underlying conditions which may make people express themselves in only one way.

As stated by Harvey Edgington, the screen story 'becomes part of the history of the house', and part of the ECH meta-narrative. The heritage managers choose to celebrate the amalgamation of fictional representation with the real country house site rather than avoid the consequences. Heritage managers take the new narratives of the screen

representations and the changing ECH meta-narrative and utilise them to draw new audiences and new experiences on-site. Country houses have been chameleons throughout their history, constantly adapting with the times. Individual country houses were built as monuments to wealth, power and commercial success, and have been modified and embellished over the years to suit the cultural, social and economic functions of the time. They have appeared in art and literature and been sculpted, painted and designed to fit the way owners and managers wanted them to appear. Commercial film and television are the current forms of popular culture to change and mould the ECH meta-narrative. When the heritage manager accepts that the screen story is a part of the country house's history, they are merely succeeding in a long tradition of revision and adaptation. The individual country house's narrative, or brand, is already out of the sole control of the management of a country house site, as popular culture representations of the generic country house on screen are impacting the public consumption of every individual country house.

5.5.4 The Heritage Management Response: Practising Control

Although the heritage managers embrace the screen representations and narratives, and arguably give up control over their brand in the public sphere, the management retains a pragmatic approach to filming. While country houses must engage with commercial practice and screen media as a good economic tool, there is always a possibility of rejecting a narrative or representation deemed unsuitable for the site. In interviews, the heritage managers discussed their views on which filming projects they felt were beneficial, which were acceptable and those with which they would never engage. When a filmic representation ran completely contradictory to the brand of the individual country house

site, the managers felt entirely in control and within their rights to reject participation, even in light of potential publicity or income. If a film is popular and viewed globally, there is no escape from the fictional representations. Distorted narratives of the individual country house sites, or the ECH meta-narrative, can become widely consumed and understood as part of English history or heritage (Boyd, 2008).

The management team at Stowe House, consisting of both the public school and the Preservation Trust, rejected a documentary with a scene portraying Nazis which could have been filmed at the school. Anna McEvoy (Interview, 2015), House Custodian at Stowe House Preservation Trust, felt this was an obvious conclusion, as neither the Trust nor the school wanted to have the site associated with Nazis. The heritage managers interviewed expressed a desire to understand the narratives of the screen productions wanting to use their sites, as there is a need to 'protect their reputation' and avoid anything too religious, 'gory', violent or 'adult-themed'. David Littlewood (Interview, 2015), of Eastnor Castle, said his team 'always want to know what the script or brief is beforehand, especially if there is any impact on the family or wedding visitors. Anything that doesn't fit with the brand we say no [to], especially something like a music video.' There are obviously problematic themes which could lead to negative associations for the individual country house by attracting problematic visitors or creating negative stories in the mainstream press. It is important to note that the parameters of problematic themes are quite wide, and while some historic house managers may have a narrow definition of what filming they embrace, other organisations may be more accommodating. For Harvey Edgington (Interview, 2015)

at the National Trust, each programme or film is assessed individually, and a decision is taken between the main organisation and the individual site.

The reason for rejecting a screen production can be more complicated when it comes to protecting the brand of the country house. Charles Berkeley (Interview, 2015), owner of Berkeley Castle, rejected an offer to be utilised in the reality television show *Made in Chelsea.* In casual discussions in my role as film advisor with Heritage4Media, Charles and his estate manager Roland felt that a reality show of this calibre would not be right for the Berkeley Castle brand, including their pitches to wedding and corporate events clients as well as their paying visitors. Reality shows, especially one which portrays 'posh' individuals living up to the stereotype, associated with a castle and country house that portrays itself as a classical, Civil War-era location to visitors and clients would be complicated for the brand. As discussed in the context chapter, reality shows also often have the lowest location fees and a smaller consumer reach, making them the least worthwhile programmes in which to participate. Coupled with the potential branding impacts, it is unsurprising country houses stay away from low-brow popular culture representations, in which their participation could be misconstrued.

These reality television programmes present an interesting case in observing managers' expectations in relation to controlling the narrative. Burghley House management was very keen on some types of reality shows, such as *Antiques Roadshow*, because the house is represented as itself; others, like Berkeley Castle mentioned earlier, avoided 'scripted' reality, such as *Made in Chelsea*. The public opinion surrounding a programme, its content and what television channel it appears on are all factors that influence the decision of a

manager when considering whether to engage with a screen production. For Philip Gompertz (Interview, 2015), House Manager at Burghley House, *Antiques Roadshow* had the right consumer audience and the right content (people bringing household items to be assessed as antiques) that matched enough brand elements of the house to be beneficial. Alternatively, the example above of Berkeley Castle and the scripted reality show *Made in Chelsea*, where wealthy young people cause drama with one another, did not match the brand elements of Berkeley Castle. An example of when the wrong choice is made and is detrimental to the brand of the country house and its commercial potential was related to me by David Littlewood (Interview, 2015), General Manager of Eastnor Castle. He expressed the view that reality shows always asked for the most (i.e. free access, help), while paying the least. Eastnor Castle hosted a competition to win a wedding at the venue on a popular daytime talk show, with the intention of increasing publicity. The popularity had an adverse effect, however, as couples that had paid for a wedding at the site felt a giveaway of a wedding cheapened their own experiences. Once a heritage manager had a negative experience, especially with reality programmes, they expressed a desire to be more careful with content and representation in future. As reality programmes are the most troublesome types of programmes to participate in, so act as a good judge of heritage manager's attitudes.

The pragmatic attitude of the heritage managers is apparent from these examples and were mirrored across the interviews. There were some types of representation deemed too problematic, such as pornography, yet the interviewees always expressed an addendum that each script or project would be taken on its own merit, as the country houses do not

have the financial capacity to make generalisations on their actions when faced with a film project. In one specific year, the need to mend the roof might be greater than the need to reject a questionable film project. In interview, the heritage managers and consultants indicated they had a choice about participating in filming at all, but I argue that this is an illusion. Filming location fees can be the funding which makes the difference between a successful and failing year; and the choice not to participate in filming is a bad financial decision and likely to mean other country houses get the business in a competitive market. The interviewees presented their situation to me as a choice to reject inappropriate scripts (such as those containing violence, religious themes or pornography) or rejecting filming which did not fit into a schedule, clashing with a wedding or other on-site experience. Although this is the attitude of the heritage managers, I argue the narrative of individual country houses is essentially being taken out of the hands of the heritage managers, through the financial and commercial need of the country house as a heritage experience. In analysis of the interview answers relating to brand management and control over visual or narrative representations, the majority of heritage managers did not reject the idea that the potential benefits from filming outweighed the loss of control over the country house narrative. Nancy Sheridan (Interview, 2016), owner of Heritage4Media, said, 'No client has ever asked [her] to be careful about script content.' I argue she is implying that the income generated from filming is more important to her clients than the potential problematic representations' impact on branding and story.

Once the screen representation reaches the public realm, the country house is distributed and consumed by the public in whatever way the consumer chooses; the country house

management have no control over their imagery and representation in the screen narrative and have no control over the success, failure or reception of the film or television programme. If the television programme becomes controversial, or is denigrated in the media, the impact on the brand of the individual country houses used within the film could be problematic. The screen representations may also impact the way the public understands the greater ECH meta-narrative, and therefore impact all country houses. On screen, the individual country house represents the greater ECH, and the ECH meta-narrative, and the connection may be lost between the screen representation and the specific site which was used on screen. While this has both positive and negative impacts for the individual country house site, it means, therefore, that the negative representation of one country house may affect all country houses, set within the parameters of the theory of the ECH meta-narrative.

5.6 Connecting the Real Country House to Its Screen Narrative

The country house on screen can never be the real country house; it is always distilled through the lens of commercialised narrative fiction. Therefore, Harvey Edgington (Interview, 2015) of the National Trust believes 'no programme will ever be accurate to history, so it is not worth trying [to be accurate]; just utilise the imagery and narrative to get close enough.' He feels 'authenticity is subjective anyway', which reflects Voase's (2008) suggestions that visitors want to bring their emotion and personal experience to the heritage visit and are less interested in learning authentic facts, more in experience and engagement. When the representation of the country house on screen is closer to authentic

history, such as in a period costume drama, it is more likely the screen narratives will become intertwined with the branding and narrative of the real country house site.

5.6.1 Understanding the Connection Between the Real Country House and Its Representation

If a representation feels realistic to the house or a time period (for instance, a costume drama vs a science-fiction film), it is more likely the screen representation will 'stick' to the country house story and brand. Some historic houses are fortunate to represent themselves on screen, such as Petworth House in the film *Mr. Turner* (2014). In this film, Petworth House played Petworth House, where British artist J. M. W. Turner both visited and painted in real life, so subsequently the film reflected real histories and connected the house closely with the film's representation, its narratives and its success. In this situation, there is no disconnect between the house and its representation; the publicity created from the media representation serves only to solidify the story the heritage producers are telling. Having an important role in a popular film or television series can impact the public view of a location and, depending on the portrayal, potentially cause problems for the heritage brand. Although not a country house, the example of the 2013 miniseries *The Mill,* filmed at Quarry Bank Mill (a National Trust property), helps express the level of authenticity and its impact on the connection between the site and the fictional representation. In the *The Mill*, several characters based on real people who lived and worked at the Quarry Bank Mill were enhanced and embellished for narrative purposes. The character of the mill owner was written in a more problematic way than the reality of the mill owners as understood by researchers in the archives of Quarry Bank. As the miniseries was filmed at the location and

the intention was to create 'presumed authenticity' by utilising the archives of the real Quarry Bank Mill, the descendants of the mill owners became understandably upset by the portrayal on screen. The real story of the heritage site and its fictional representation were similar enough to portray a semi-reality; according to Edgington, the hope of the heritage managers was to create a dialogue about the real site versus the fictionally embellished story.

Some country houses play starring roles in the commercial screen productions but are not playing themselves: Highclere Castle and its role as Downton Abbey in *Downton Abbey* (2010–15) and Castle Howard and its role as Brideshead in *Brideshead Revisited* (1981, 2006) are two good examples of this. These houses become synonymous with the locations they portrayed due to the popularity of the screen production and the central role the house played on screen. These are fictional heritage narratives, in that while they do reflect 'historical-ness' and nostalgia, they also contain modern sympathies and storylines. The associations become blurred between the real and fictional houses, especially when the real location utilises these popular programmes for marketing purposes. When *Brideshead Revisited* was reimagined for a 2006 movie, it was necessary to use Castle Howard again, as it was thought it would be impossible for audiences to believe that any other house was Brideshead. These houses are used in scenes which reflect Meinig's (1979) suggestion that, for a house to be understood by the viewer, it must have scenic shots without narrative for the viewers to observe, wherein the house is a character itself. When the house plays a character, it is recognisable to the consumer-viewer, which can then translate into visitors recognising the house and associating the narrative with the country house site. It is these

representations the heritage manager must be most careful in reviewing, for they are the ones that will be become part of the history and story of the country house itself.

Due to the potency of the ECH meta-narrative, individual historic houses are rarely granted either of these opportunities. Most often, country houses are given the opportunity for one room to be utilised and the house is unrecognisable, or the house is in a production with little connection to heritage, historical-ness or nostalgia. These representations are much less likely to have problematic repercussions for the real heritage site, and therefore are of less concern to a country house management team and, by extension, are more likely to be accepted. On my visit to Eastnor Castle in 2015, it was playing a country house hotel for the programme *Agatha Raisin* (2016), while for *The King's Speech* (2010) one room was used as a drawing room; for both of these programmes Eastnor Castle will not be recognisable, and the name of the house will not be identified on the screen or in the credits. There are no shots of the outside or key details which will identify the rooms. Eastnor is merely 'playing' 'a country house'. Another example is Berkeley Castle, which often 'plays' historic rooms of a number of different buildings, some of which are not castles or country houses at all. While working on set at Berkeley Castle, I experienced the Long Drawing Room 'playing' the Assembly Rooms for *Poldark* (2015–19) and a medieval hall for *Galavant* (2015–16). Alternatively, a heritage manager will make the choice not to participate in a programme even when the house is not a feature or a main character in the narrative. Robert Floyd (Interview, 2015), owner of Great Chalfield Manor, discussed with me his uncertainties about the realism of screen representations, as he had been involved with a production where the burning of an effigy of the Pope was shot at his home (which is also a National

Trust property). Even though he did not utilise these images or this part of the on-screen story for marketing purposes, the film tourists still made the connection with his property. Owners and managers who had experienced controversial screen images and narratives, like Floyd, were far more aware of the strong effect screen representation can have on their properties.

Documentary and news programmes are often welcomed to historic houses, even though the house stands to make little money from them, because the house is always 'playing' itself and is often named by the presenters. As long as the story of the news or documentary is aligned to the brand of the house, or tells the 'real' story, it is a positive addition to a publicity scheme. Understanding the different types of relationships between English country house locations and their screen representations helps underline why authenticity, or the appearance of authenticity on screen, can impact the relationship between locations and their representations.

5.6.2 Consuming the Country House on Screen: Viewers and the Country House as a Character

Across the interviews, and in conversations on film and television sets, there was agreement between heritage managers and film crews that programmes such as *Downton Abbey* perceptibly changed visitors' expectations of the country house. Viewers may have expectations of realism, or historical-ness, in their consumption of the country house on screen. For example, Charles Berkeley (Interview, 2015), owner of Berkeley Castle, noted that he and his management team receive letters from members of the public who feel the

Castle had not been portrayed realistically in screen productions. In the case of Berkeley Castle, the heritage managers often do not try to utilise the screen imagery or narratives for further commercial purposes, suggesting the screen role alone carries enough connection to the real location to warrant emotional responses from viewers. Viewers and fans have a high level of engagement with film and television programmes, wherein some fans feel they become a part of the on-screen narrative and trespass into it (Jenkins, 2013). This strong emotional reaction means the story, or brand, of the individual country house stands to be highly impacted by screen representations.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the relationship between the real English country house site and its management with the representation on screen of the ECH imagery and narrative; it has also illustrated the role of the greater country house myth to the above relationship. The chapter began by outlining the role of the interviews, and my place as researcher, to understand how the interview data should be understood. The chapter introduced the theory of the English Country House meta-narrative, which proposes the English Country House (ECH) is a convention of popular culture, and the depiction of the English Country House is repeated over and over with the same values and associated meanings, creating the English country house myth, the meanings of which were discussed in depth in the literature review. The ECH myth is both commercially and culturally valuable to the screen producers, so they utilise it repeatedly in film, and many different country houses come to play one country house on screen. Herein, the individual country houses become

interchangeable on screen, and as all are part of one ECH meta-narrative, every time the ECH meta-narrative is utilised on screen, every country house is impacted.

I then delved further into the commercial basis of the relationship between the country house site and its management with the screen production companies. The country house needs the income from location fees, as well as the increased publicity and awareness associated with appearing in screen productions, which translates into increased event bookings and visitor numbers. The country house, like all heritage sites in the UK, is always in need of further funding support and country house managers are constantly looking for more ways of being commercially successful. This means the management of country house sites are in a difficult position when it comes to 'playing' a location in a commercial screen production; often the benefits of economic success outweigh potential brand implications. The screen production also benefits from the cultural and commercial value of the country house on screen, which consumers continue to value in high viewing numbers. Importantly, the English country house has always been a site of commercial activity, and a place which is made and remade to represent different values and myths. Film and television are just the newest method by which the public consume the country house in popular culture, and by which country houses, and the ECH meta-narrative, are impacted. Interviewees' responses helped demonstrate this relationship with their replies to questions around the benefits and costs of working in filming, and the importance of commercial success to the country house site.

The chapter then explored the power narratives between the screen production, the country house management and the ECH meta-narrative in relation to film representations

and the brand, or 'real history' of the country house site. As heritage managers are pushed to fund their sites and prove commercial ability, they are not in a position to reject working as film and television locations. As the country houses need this funding, they often make the choice to participate in screen productions because they must, rather than fully comprehending the potential outcomes. The screen productions bring income and publicity to the country house site, which is much needed, while the country house provides that cultural value to the screen media. I argue this can be seen as giving up power to the commercial screen producers, as the narrative of the country house site is no longer in the hands of the heritage managers, but in those of the creative producers of popular culture. Yet, on reflection of the literature, the narrative of the country house has never been formed solely by the owners and managers of English country houses; the writers, commentators, artists and members of the public have interpreted the English country house for the wider consumption. The ECH meta-narrative, the amalgamation of all the representations of the English Country House, has long impacted how the visitor-consumer interprets the country house; film and television are just two of the mediums disseminating the tropes associated with the imagery of the country house site. As the ECH meta-narrative grows out of popular culture, it follows that the latest and most prevalent form of popular culture would further control the brand of the country house. The section explored the impact of these power narratives on specific country houses, the level of awareness heritage managers had of this phenomenon, and how heritage site staff may attempt to retain some control over the brand of their country house.

Lastly, the chapter investigated the connection between the screen representation and the real country house, and which types of productions were most impactful on the individual country house and the ECH meta-narrative as a whole. Interviewees' thoughts illustrated a range of engagement between the real country house and its screen representation, depending on the film or television programme, the proximity to the real house or the real history, whether the country house itself was a 'character' and even how successful that production became. As the public is so used to consuming the English Country House through popular culture, the realism of the screen representation has the most influence on whether the country house will be associated with its fictional or semi-realistic screen representation. All country houses can be consumed as part of the ECH meta-narrative, so all country houses are impacted by positive and negative representations of the English Country House on screen.

Following this analysis of the relationship between the English country house site and its management, its representation on screen and the ECH meta-narrative, Chapter 6 will explore how heritage producers utilise the imagery and narratives of screen productions and their popularity to create visitor experiences that are commercially pragmatic and culturally exciting, but utilise fictional narratives at the country house site. This utilisation of the fictional country house on screen presents a stronger connection between the English country house, its fictional representations and the ECH meta-narrative – the meaning of the English Country House.

CHAPTER 6

PRESENTING THE MEDIATISED COUNTRY HOUSE: SCREEN TOURISTS, PRODUCING THE HERITAGE EXPERIENCE AND CONTROLLING THE NARRATIVE

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 outlined the relationship between the country house heritage site, the ECH meta-narrative, and film and television representations. This relationship is commercially orientated, where the country house holds an economic value for the screen production companies. This value comes from both the physical space of the country house site and the meaning of the ECH meta-narrative as represented by each country house. The real country house, as a representation of the ECH meta-narrative, is used by the screen productions to increase the value of their creations. The country house site also has a commercial reason for engaging with the film production: country house management earns a fee from the location shooting and potential increased visitor and commercial spend on-site through increased publicity. Through its role on film, the country house site adopts elements of meaning from the screen representation, blurring the lines between the fictional representations and narrative and the real country house heritage sites and experiences. I argue that this relationship is unevenly controlled, where the control over both the country house meta-narrative and the narrative of each individual site lies in greater percentage with the screen production and, even further, with the consumers of screen productions. For the heritage manager, the choice of engaging with commercial filming, for the purposes

of increasing the country house site's income and commercial value, means the country house is consumed through a fictional narrative lens.

Chapter 6 introduces the actions of the heritage manager in designing, producing and presenting the heritage experience for the visitor in reflection of film and television representations and expectations of visitors; it also unravels the role of the ECH meta-narrative in these actions. The prevalence of the ECH meta-narrative (where all individual country houses are seen as one archetypal English Country House and its associated narrative myth) means each country house is already associated with the fictional country house of popular culture, therefore heritage producers can retain some commercial and cultural value from screen representations by reproducing the screen representations on-site. The first section of Chapter 6 reviews some of the issues around the acceptance of popular culture as a means of consuming heritage, and the ingrained concepts around high-brow and low-brow culture as a way for the public to engage with history, historical concepts and historical spaces.

The chapter then goes on to reintroduce the concepts of film tourism and the expectations and needs of film tourists in relation to the country house on screen and country house narratives. Although I did not undertake data collection of screen tourism, the literature review and the understanding of film tourism by heritage professionals illustrates the reasoning behind producing screen-related visitor experiences. I will then delve into the concepts around presenting and producing the visitor experience on-site and how this is related to film tourism, commercial and cultural value and the ECH meta-narrative; this

section is introductory to the in-depth analysis of the marketing, visitor experiences and tourism literature that are created in reaction to the country house on screen.

This section begins by exploring marketing and publicity, elaborating on the different mediums of online promotion, such as social media and websites, then moving to physical marketing literature. It then investigates how country house staff utilise images and narratives of the country house on screen in promotion, the difficulties they face and how these actions connect the screen representation of the country house closer to the real country house site and the ECH meta-narrative.

The next section surveys the use of film and television representations, narratives and imagery in producing visitor experiences and interpretation within the country house site, looking at examples from across the public and private sectors of country house ownership. This section highlights how important the association with film and television is to the success of the visitor experiences, and how the situation in which these fictional narratives are reproduced and experienced in the real country house space fixes the screen narratives to the story of the real country house site and the ECH meta-narrative. First, I will utilise three National Trust country houses and their film exhibitions, followed by an overview of the well-known programme *Downton Abbey* (2010–15) and its location, Highclere Castle. The chapter will then look at a number of different types of film and television exhibitions and events.

The penultimate section of the chapter outlines the commercial experiences and products that come out of the representations of country houses on film and in popular culture,

which are available for the public to consume, and how these fit into the commercial power of the screen representation of the country house, as well as how they drive the cultural values of the country house and the ECH meta-narrative. Lastly, the chapter covers the role of tourism organisations and experiences in utilising the popularity of the screen representations and the commercial power of popular culture consumption to create marketing materials to draw international visitors to Britain. It also highlights how visitor experiences, created for commercial gain but not by heritage managers, create a space in which visitors can place themselves within the narrative of the screen, and therefore the ECH meta-narrative.

6.2 Producing the Country House on Screen, On-Site

The English Country House representation is consumed repeatedly in film and television, and due to the strength of the ECH meta-narrative, this representation on television impacts all real country house historic sites. Tony Berry (Interview, 2015), Visitor Experience Director at the National Trust, answered, 'Why wouldn't we?' when asked why the National Trust is so keen to be involved with commercial film and television projects. These screen representations bring publicity, wider awareness and new audiences as visitors. Yet, Chapter 5 explored the power narratives within the country house heritage site/screen production/ECH meta-narrative relationship, wherein the country house owners and managers have the least control over the narratives of the country house. The country house of popular culture, the ECH meta-narrative, is how screen audiences consume the country house, and these audiences may expect to consume the same narratives on-site as film tourists. As the country house manager is faced with the narrative from popular culture

producers, their space for jurisdiction over their own narrative brand and visitor experience lies in embracing these representations, narratives and the opportunities associated with awareness. This is where the popular culture screen representations become reproduced and presented on-site, as the way to engage visitors with country houses, make money and take back some commercial and cultural control over the trajectory of each individual country house. But this reproduction of the commercial, fictional narratives on-site connects the country house on screen and the real country house physically and in the mind of the consumer, merging the ECH meta-narrative of popular culture ever closer to the real country house space.

6.2.1 Popular Culture and Commercial Heritage: Is This a Problem?

To briefly review what was discussed in depth in Chapter 2, much of the heritage debate has focused on the commercialisation of heritage, with multiple critics (see Lowenthal, 1985; Hewison, 1987; Samuel, 1994; and Cook, 1996) suggesting heritage should not form a part of the leisure industry and others (Wright, 1985) arguing that the public aptitude for nostalgia is a worrisome development. The appearance of the country house in the costume, period, 'heritage' drama places it firmly within the nostalgia-led commercial space. Sargent (1996) argues that these heritage dramas have commercialised the heritage sector as a whole, by creating expectations of sanitised history, while Hewison (1987) and Wright (1985) claim that they create false nostalgic representations of the past. Even within the industry, I found that there was a bias against television and films as a means of conveying heritage stories. Lucy Hutchings (Interview, 2015), then Interim Head of Filming for English Heritage, discussed the uncertainties felt by her colleagues towards commercial

screen media, stating that in the past English Heritage had felt 'we are heritage and high-brow' and film wasn't a part of that vision. Recently, though, English Heritage decided to think about the publicity from filming projects on-site, specifically with *Strictly Come Dancing*, which had been filming at Wrest Park. The attitude of English Heritage exemplifies a trend I noted both in the interviews and within my paid roles in the sector of heritage organisations: the change from negative associations with popular culture at the heritage site to recognising the benefits and embracing the opportunities.

Harvey Edgington (Interview, 2015), Head of Filming and Locations at the National Trust, very aptly echoed de Groot's (2009) observation that heritage has always been consumed across different media, and that film and television are only today's (relatively) new popular culture forms. Edgington observed that, 'back in the day, … you would have got Capability Brown to do the garden [landscape design] or Gainsborough to do your portrait or someone else to paint the house, so what's the difference with Tim Burton [film director] doing [it]?'

With this statement, Edgington is illustrating the continuity of the commercial space of the country house, and how the partnerships with commercial film and television continue to work within this commercial context. The association of film and television with popular culture in a problematic way is only the fear of critics, which can be understood as protecting the status quo. As Smith (2006) describes in her theories on the authorised heritage discourse, the critics of commercialised heritage believe there is a correct and incorrect way to interpret heritage spaces and historical narrative. I argue that what the heritage critics are missing is the commercial history of the country house, wherein it is only by creating a heritage narrative of the English country house that we separate the buildings

from their initial use, which was as a symbol of wealth and power through commercial success. Edgington suggests that creating representations of the country house which enhance its looks or narrative to create a positive impression on consumers (viewers or visitors) is not a new tactic for the country house owner. The English country house was commercial from its genesis. Edgington disagrees that the acclaim achieved with the publicity from film and television is problematic; he believes it reflects the tradition of the English country house and estate looking to impress the viewers, and film and television is just another way to remake and remould the vision of the country house for the twenty-first century. Film and television and its subsequent reproduction and presentation to visitors by the country house managers is just the latest way house owners and managers are utilising commercial structures and their associated publicity in popular culture to increase their power in the leisure sector.

6.3 Outlining the Actions, Needs and Expectations of Screen Tourists: Why Screen Tourism is Important

Although this thesis does not analyse the motivations or experiences of the screen tourists through collection of data, it very much takes into account the phenomenon of screen tourism and the impact this can have on the country house heritage site. Some of the research that is available on screen tourism was discussed in the literature review. To be a successful leisure experience, the English country house heritage site must attract tourists (Hughes and Carlsen, 2010) and the greater the number of tourism visits, the greater the income. Television and film inspire tourists to visit locations seen on screen (Croy and Heitmann, 2011), so it is beneficial to the country house heritage site to engage with screen

tourism activities. Beeton (2005, p. 5) suggests screen tourists search for 'nature, scenery and mountains' and want the 'countryside to symbolise the "golden place"' that still exists in the psyche of urbanites today'. This yearning for the nostalgic retro-chic (Wright, 1985) is useful in relation to the English country house, as it most often appears in heritage costume dramas as that 'golden place' in the countryside. The country house management reacts to the needs of the screen tourists by utilising the imagery and narratives of the commercial media stories to draw in the screen tourists and create visitor experiences that speak to their wants and needs.

Harvey Edgington (Interview, 2015), Head of Filming and Locations at the National Trust, described to me the experiences of both Basildon Park and Lyme Park after they appeared in highly popular film and television versions of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (2005 and 1995 respectively); both experienced a surge in visitor numbers. *Pride and Prejudice* (1995), with Colin Firth, according to Edgington, 'is still making Lyme Park £900,000 [a year]' in relation to tourist visits based on screen representations and narratives; this claim is substantiated in Olsberg SPI's 2015 research into film tourism (Olsberg SPI, 2015, p. 29). Olsberg states that, 'despite its age, *Pride and Prejudice* is clearly still a big driver with 90.48% of screen tourists pointing to the series as partly motivating their visit' (Olsberg SPI, 2015, p. 76). Increased visit numbers, and the spend associated with these numbers, are a concrete and measurable benefit for the country house to evidence the important economic role of appearing in film and television productions. Furthermore, as outlined by Byrne (2013), many of these productions are distributed globally and are available for little to no cost, meaning the potential for new visitors has extensive possibilities across the world and

in new audience segments. Heritage managers can run into difficulties if there is an expectation of visitors from a new screen representation, as there is always the possibility the programme may 'flop' or the location is cut completely from the final product. The road to screen tourism success is paved with potential potholes. Nancy Sheridan and Jamie Campbell (Interviews, 2016), owner and employee respectively of Heritage4Media, relayed to me in interview how essential it was for historic country houses to maintain low expectations of benefits from screen media, outside of the direct daily fee.

To capitalise on the screen representations, their imagery and narratives, and the potential for increased publicity and visits at the country house heritage site, the management of the country house must utilise marketing initiatives to draw screen tourists to the country house, and create screen-related experiences to meet the needs of the tourists when they arrive on-site. These screen-related marketing and visitor experiences present a stronger connection between the screen representations of a country house and the visitor experience on-site, which meets the theoretical expectations of the screen tourist. As the country house heritage experience must trade itself as a commodity, the screen-inspired visitor will need to 'buy into' the experience of visiting the country house and be willing to spend money and precious leisure time in the country house space. These visitors have already consumed a specific representation of the country house on screen and will have expectations of that experience. For instance, film visitors to Highclere Castle have likely consumed the media-fiction (Dyer, 2002) of *Downton Abbey* (2010–15) on their television, and this has drawn them to the country house site. It is then left to the management of

Highclere Castle to decide how much of the visitor experience will reflect this impetus for visiting.

In addition to the country house presenting itself in reflection on its screen imagery and narrative, national organisations such as the National Trust, VisitBritain and the GREAT Britain campaign often utilise film imagery and narratives to sell tourist experiences. Campaigns to encourage visitors to spend time at locations seen on screen impact on the design of the individual country house visitor experience. Fyall (2008) understands this relationship between heritage sites and greater tourist organisations as a key in the successful relation of the heritage experience to visitors. For the screen tourist, organised campaigns of screen experiences may create a greater expectation for a visit to a country house heritage site; this creates pressure on the heritage managers to meet the expectation of the visitor.

6.4 Reproducing and Presenting the Screen-Induced Country House: Utilising Screen Representations to Control the Trajectory of the Country House Site

Underlying the actions taken by heritage managers to utilise screen imagery and narrative in their own presentation of heritage experiences is the motivation to reclaim commercial and narrative control of the historic house site. In Chapter 5 I argued that the engagement and participation by the country house in film and television productions took some of the commercial and narrative control of the story of each country house away from the on-site heritage managers and into the hands of the commercial production, popular culture representations and the ECH meta-narrative. The commercial production utilised the

commercial and cultural value of the country house space to sell films and television programmes with a nostalgic idyll of the past and control the narrative through the dissemination of fictional stories using the country house as a location. The country house management teams look to regain control over their commercial and cultural production through utilising these fictional narratives to increase visitor engagement. Heritage managers can take back some control over their own narratives for public consumption and increase their commercial value at the same time. The country house managers interviewed expressed positive reactions when asked questions about utilising film and television imagery for visitor experiences and presenting the country house site to the public. The country house managers saw the film and television imagery and public engagement on this large scale as an opportunity to increase visitor numbers and income.

Heritage managers are able to utilise film and television narratives to engage in diversification practices and audience growth through new programming and visitor experiences based on film- and television-interested audiences. Often, the mediums themselves (film and television) provide new opportunities in interpretation and engagement design. The interviews illustrate heritage managers framing their experience as taking commercial benefits from film and television for their visitor experiences and utilising the film and television narratives to increase their own cultural value to leisure audiences. Marketing managers utilise film and television narratives across marketing channels. The film and television representations are reproduced through heritage interpretation and experiences. The ways in which the country house reproduces screen narratives within their heritage offering will be discussed in this chapter, from exhibitions, interpretation and

events to the sale of commercial products. These interpretative choices allow the heritage producers to control the impact of the screen narrative on-site by acknowledging the film narrative as a part of the story of the individual country house and utilising that connection to increase visitor numbers and, ultimately, revenue.

To touch on the concept of the ECH meta-narrative before delving into the material analysis of the film-induced visitor experiences at the country house site, it is worth noting that the ECH meta-narrative runs throughout the relationship between the country house heritage site and its own narrative. The film and television representations and narratives utilise the ECH meta-narrative and its commercial and cultural value for the consumer audience; therefore, when the heritage manager is producing heritage experiences based on film and television on-site, they are also reproducing the ECH meta-narrative. Screen imagery and narratives augment the associated concepts and representations within the ECH meta-narrative both from the screen and, once reproduced on-site, at the location of the 'real' country house. Heritage managers look for control over their own narratives, stories and branding; this may be commercial control through utilising film narratives to draw visitors to spend time and money, or cultural control in presenting the stories through which visitors engage with the country house, through on-site interpretation or visitor materials off-site. The heritage manager will never be able to control how the English country house is presented in popular culture and on screen, nor what the English country house means to the viewing and visiting public, but they can shape their own stories by drawing visitors to the site and helping to structure the experience of the consumption of the country house at which they are visiting. The country house must be economically successful within the

leisure market, so the visitor experience, marketing and interpretation designed around screen representations must also be commercially satisfactory. Ultimately, the viewing and visiting public will decide what experiences, events and publicity are successful in relation to the country house, so perhaps it is the public who actually retain control over the country house narrative, rather the producers of the country house media or the heritage managers themselves.

6.5 Publicity: Utilising Screen Narratives to Attract New Visitors

Theoretical concepts around film tourism are explained well by Connell (2012) and highlighted in the literature review. Austin suggested there is no 'uniformity of response' (2002, p. 12) by the audience to screen representations, and Monk (2012) theorises there is no one audience for heritage dramas, so the fictional narratives and imagery give the country house management the opportunity to attract these new audiences to the country house site. Following the examples of Iwashita (2008) and the draw of the cultural imagery of Britain on film for the Japanese, the imagery of country houses and the ECH meta-narrative, or a specific country house, could attract visitors to the site.

As was discussed in Chapter 5, the country house managers understand they recoup an increased income from participating in film and television location shoots; but they also expressed knowledge of the fact that they could increase visitor awareness of the country house site, attracting new audiences and utilising the film representations and narratives as new reasons to visit the country house. The first step in attracting new visitors, the ones who have seen the film or television programme in which the individual country house has

featured, is to use the screen programme imagery and narratives within the publicity produced by the country house. The publicity is entirely dependent on two factors; first, on the type of representation and how the country house is portrayed, which was discussed in Chapter 4; and, secondly, on how the country house heritage producers utilise the appearance of the country house on screen. These actions then determine how successful marketing practices will be at utilising screen representations for publicity, and how closely aligned the screen country house will become to the real country house site or the ECH meta-narrative. Whether through traditional marketing leaflets and brochures, or online on social media or websites, utilising the connection to the film or television programme helps the viewers make a connection between their enjoyment of the film and its narrative and the location at which the screen production was filmed. In the words of Tony Berry (Interview, 2015), Head of Visitor Experience at the National Trust, 'You've seen the programme, now see where it really happened.'

6.5.1 You've Seen Us on Screen…

This section will outline how the heritage managers view and react to their country houses on screen, analyse their observations of visitor reactions to the country house on screen and illustrate the importance of brand-building in the managing of a country house site. Traditionally, the audience for country house visiting has been seen as middle-class. In the literature review and context chapters, I touched on the history of country house visiting, and its place as a middle-class signifier. Smith (2009) attributes the place of the country house as a heritage experience firmly within the middle-class domain as a performance of self-identity. Visitors to the country house 'amble around the grounds … view the artwork'

and are performing their middle-class, cultured identity (Smith, 2009, p. 38). Country house management is actively seeking to attract new audiences and reach out to new demographics, and commercial screen media, with its global distribution, create a chance for the country house to reach viewers outside its traditional base.

Interviewees expressed the belief that the publicity from being in film and television would increase their audience numbers and potential visitors; as Leslie Feore (Interview, 2016) of Syon House said, 'It's all about what we can promote.' Philip Gompertz (Interview 2015), Manager of Burghley House, felt 'publicity is the biggest benefit' and increases visitor numbers. The dissemination of screen media, and specifically heritage dramas, is global, and Monk (2012) demonstrates there is a significant audience for heritage dramas, which is the most common place for the country house to appear on screen. Monk (2012) further breaks this audience into niche audiences who are watching the programme for various reasons and with varying outcomes. This work suggests the more places a country house is seen on screen (i.e. film, television, social media, websites, news), the larger and more differentiated the audience becomes, as new audiences use new mediums of consumption. The heritage managers are conscious of the impact of film representation on the public awareness of their site and how utilising film and television imagery and narratives in their own publicity, therefore linking a popular film to their site, will be beneficial.

Croy and Heitmann (2011) discuss how a strong representation of any tourist destination on screen is necessary to create a connection between the screen viewer and said tourist destination, in this case the country house. When this strong connection is made between the screen representation and the country house utilised as the location, then the media

representation can become a source of information and inspiration for the viewer about the real site. Tooke and Baker (1996) posit that images on screen influence choices made by viewers about where and what to visit on holiday; therefore, it is wise for the country houses participating in commercial film and television to utilise this to engage viewers to visit their site. After an analysis of the interviews, it is clear that the heritage managers I interviewed had an understanding and awareness of the commercial potential of the publicity from film and television before they engaged with a production company. Simon Foster (Interview, 2016), Director of the Commercial Heritage Consultancy at Savills, was particularly keen to stress that he advises his clients to think about how their representations on screen might impact publicity, in both positive and negative ways. Leslie Feore (Interview, 2016), House Manager at Syon House, felt the publicity from film and television was especially useful in attracting weddings and other corporate events and that 'film is a useful tool for publicity'.

Interviewees expressed a belief that a first-time film and television visitor could become a repeat or regular visitor once they came on-site and gained an awareness of the diverse offerings at any individual country house. Roland Brown and Charles Berkeley (Interviews, 2015) at Berkeley Castle were adamant on this point, with Brown asserting that 'their [the visitor's] expectations are influenced by the film. It can also be an impetus for previous visitors to return.' Berkeley described his experiences of discussions with visitors who stated they had come to Berkeley Castle because 'they had heard [a film or television programme] was filmed in Gloucestershire', but stayed for the children's experiences or the volunteers' excellent tours. Lucy Abraham (Interview, 2015), Assistant Visitor Experience Manager at

Ham House, also felt film and television programmes were an additional incentive to visit. As Voase (2008) stated, visitors are increasingly sophisticated in their choice-making of heritage-lead leisure activities, and it is unlikely the heritage visitor is simply following what they are told. It is more likely film and television is another inspiration to visitors to choose one heritage experience over another. As this thesis did not pursue data from the visitor or consumer perspective, or question how and why visitors engage with a heritage space, the previous research on film tourism will inform the further analysis of the production of the heritage experience on-site.

6.5.2 Capitalising on Branding and Marketing Through Screen Publicity

The concept of the brand and branding was very important to the interviewees. Simon Foster (Interview, 2016) said, 'If you are trying to develop a brand, what better way than being a key location in a movie or major TV show.' He outlined in discussion how important brand is to sell a property to visitors, funders, event organisers, brides or even buyers. He used an example from Highclere Castle: Katie Price (of well-known glamour model fame) held her wedding there and arrived in a white pumpkin on wheels; this wedding was televised. This screen representation had a negative impact on the wedding business of Highclere Castle due to the ostentatious, glitzy nature of both Katie Price and the pumpkin carriage, which was not in keeping with the nostalgic, upper-class, traditional expectation (i.e. the ECH meta-narrative) of a country house like Highclere Castle. This example is useful to illustrate how important building a well-respected brand is for a country house business (whether charitable or commercial) and that a brand is 'more than just a logo on a letterhead' (Interview with Simon Foster, 2016). A brand encompasses the less quantifiable

elements, such as visual presentation and the often indefinable 'feel' of a place or experience (Boyd, 2008), and these are particularly vulnerable to popular culture representations and the reactions of the public. Heritage managers must make the choice about how publicity will impact on their self-identified brand, which might differ to how visitors and consumers perceive the brand of a country house or a heritage organisation. The individual 'myth' or brand of each country house may be altered by an appearance on screen, particularly when impacted by the choice of management to utilise the screen narratives or imagery in the publicity materials produced by the country house managers, or larger organisations of the heritage industry like the Historic Houses Association or the National Trust.

Roland Brown (Interview, 2015), estate manager at Berkeley Castle, felt the publicity from filming specifically helped 'build the brand' of the wedding business; he noted anecdotally that screen representations play a role in inspiring brides to book their weddings at Berkeley Castle. Lucy Abraham (Interview, 2015) felt she had to be careful about what Ham House was involved with, stating, 'It has to be right' – nothing 'detrimental for our image' (meaning brand). David Littlewood (Interview 2105) from Eastnor Castle felt that they would say no to 'anything that doesn't fit with the brand', while Vikki Stronge (Interview, 2015) Visitor Services Manager at Haddon Hall felt publicity from some films that were shot on-site (*The Princess Bride* (1987), *Jane Eyre* (2011)) 'increased the target demographic of visitors' and 'makes us more attractive for foreign visitors'. The acceptance by heritage managers of the importance of branding (and the marketing of the brand) illustrates how

crucial commercial marketing and branding structures are to the success of these country house businesses.

6.5.3 The Role of Social Media and the Internet

Having outlined how the heritage managers view their country houses on screen, their observations of visitor reactions and the focus on building branding narratives, this section will illustrate how the management of country houses utilise film and television representations within their marketing and publicity resources.

The easiest and most cost-effective means of capitalising on the screen imagery and narratives is through social media. In a financially difficult environment, it is prudent to utilise free sources of publicity, of which social media is the simplest and reaches the broadest audience. Social media is also fast-moving and engages with fans and followers in a way that feels immediate. Jenkins' (2013) theories on participatory film culture are relevant here, in that the social media followers are able to engage with screen narratives in real-time, and this means the country house management can be part of the discourse, if the marketing team is savvy. In addition, in the past twenty years, the dissemination of screen representations has become widespread with the advent of both legal and illegal distribution of screen media on the internet. Monk (2013) illustrates how the internet provides a much cheaper means of access to film and television on a global scale, and this simple, if problematic, means of distribution indicates greater numbers of potential visitors will see the film or television programme. The knowledgeable historic house managers can interact with these fans and engage them with the real country house site.

Issues for the heritage manager and marketer in utilising social media centre around the rights to photography and any non-disclosure agreements in place in relation to the film or television programme. In marketing terms, the optimal time to promote the site in relation to film or television is prior to the release of the programming or film. Unfortunately, very often the images are under strict non-disclosure agreements or the country house management has no rights to imagery or lacks the ability to state they are appearing in a screen production. Once the programme has aired or the film is in cinemas, the country house can then post and tweet about the film or television programme through any publicly available images or narratives. That National Trust is a prime example of being particularly adept at employing social channels to promote themselves through film and television imagery and narrative and utilising them to induce film and television tourism. As the National Trust is a big organisation with a large social media support team, it is not surprising that they are at the forefront of film tourism promotion online.

Image 6.1 @nationaltrust Twitter account
(Screenshot captured 18 August 2017 by author)

This example from the @nationaltrust Twitter page illustrates the National Trust utilising a popular culture event, the BAFTAs, to link the public viewership with some of their

locations. These locations, including Lacock Abbey (in the main image), have been used in popular and successful UK dramas which were nominated for an award in 2017. Twitter followers are likely to know both *Wolf Hall* (2015) and *Poldark* (2015–19) and recognise a positive association with the BAFTAs; this awareness reminds followers about the association between these National Trust sites, screen representations and the ability to visit the 'real' places they were filmed. As Harvey Edgington (Interview, 2015) discussed, using a film to lead visitors into a heritage place is a successful marketing strategy from his perspective, and cements in their minds the connection between a screen depiction and the real place. As there is no imagery of the actual films on-site in the tweet, this piece of marketing is more likely to engage viewers with the actual site, rather than the film narratives.

The National Trust marketing team also creates and collaborates on their own materials for distribution across social media and other marketing channels, such as the *National Trust* magazine and their website. Below is an image from a video made about the long-running BBC series *Poldark* (2015–19), parts of which are filmed at National Trust sites, including Levant Mine, which forms an iconic part of the imagery of *Poldark* and the Cornwall coast. The film highlighted below was created by the National Trust staff and includes interviews with *Poldark* production staff and behind-the-scenes footage shot at the Mine. The topics of discussion are on the positive impact of working at the real heritage locations in Cornwall. This is available on the National Trust YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3evrzoFAPM). The simple film is then distributed across the social media channels of the National Trust, including the screenshot below from

the Facebook page. Putting the video in many locations provides more spaces for viewers and fans to engage with the stories. Marketing managers can also use hashtags (i.e. #poldark) to engage with *Poldark* fans who may not follow the National Trust social media pages; there are also algorithms available for low or minimal cost that can help reach film and television fans across social media channels. The caption for Facebook also highlights how filming at heritage sites helps to 'look after them for ever', which I would argue is an apology for any disruption caused to visitors and a legitimisation of the necessary income.

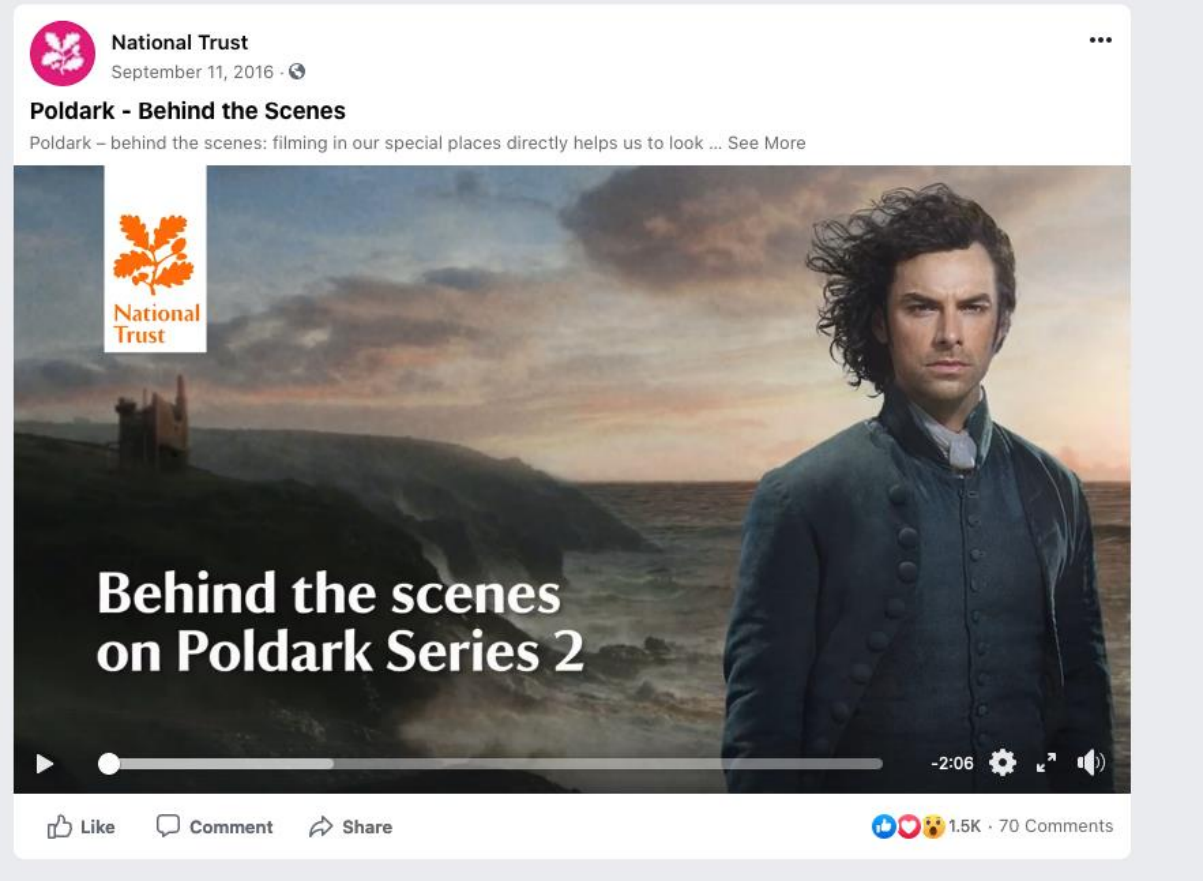


Image 6.2 'Behind the scenes on Poldark Series 2', National Trust Facebook Page (Screenshot captured 16 August 2017 by author)

The television programme *Poldark* represents certain cultural values including nostalgic Englishness, and country houses underline important scenes in the programme. The utilisation of the nostalgic setting outlines a commentary on class, tradition and romance, among many others, as well as a nostalgic aptitude for heritage. The nostalgic narratives of *Poldark*, and its associated locations, carry a commercial value in the audiences it reaches, both in the domestic market and globally when the television programme is purchased by foreign television providers. The National Trust marketing teams recognise the commercial opportunities that come with an association with a successful television programme as well as the cultural power it provides in portraying narratives which highlight their heritage sites to audiences who may be newly engaged with heritage.

Social media also allows country houses, estates and other historic properties to exploit film and television marketing and tourism by other organisations, for absolutely no cost, and without needing permission from any film studio for image reproduction or photography on set. The leisure tourism sector, and specifically national tourism organisations, plays an important role in promoting both heritage and screen tourism experiences. In the following example, Lacock Abbey, a National Trust site in Wiltshire, re-tweeted two different Twitter posts highlighting the Abbey's role in the filming of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001).

Image 6.3 @BBCWiltshire Twitter account, retweeted by @Lacock Abbey Twitter account (Screenshot captured 5 July 2017 by author)

Image 6.4 @VisitBath Twitter account, retweeted by @Lacock Abbey Twitter account (Screenshot captured 5 July 2017 by author)

By utilising one radio account, BBC Wiltshire, and one tourist organisation account, Visit Bath, the management of Lacock Abbey employed the anniversary of the release of the first *Harry Potter* book, which is not related directly to Lacock Abbey, to remind followers, and therefore visitors, that the site appeared in the first *Harry Potter* film. Lacock Abbey is able to capitalise on promotional work by other organisations and avoid engaging directly with the production companies or issues around image copyright as these images are already in the public domain. Utilising these images of narratives from books and films on the social

media pages run by the country house heritage sites brings the proximity of the fictional narratives of the films and the narratives on-site even closer to each other.

Promoting screen representation via social media channels is not just limited to large national organisations like the National Trust or English Heritage; many independent historic sites and country houses utilise their film and television experiences to attract new audiences. Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire was featured as a location in the second season of *Poldark* (2015–19); during the filming of this season, I was working on set at Berkeley Castle. Through working with the Berkeley Castle team, I learned management had signed a very restrictive contract which did not allow them to use any photographs or market their involvement with the programme prior to the release of the second season and they were not given access to any press photography. Once the programme had aired, the management team was free to make the association between Berkeley Castle and *Poldark.* In the example below, Berkeley Castle's social media team do not use a photograph to highlight their film representation, but simple text to help audiences associate *Poldark*, and its popularity, with their historic house. This Twitter post specifically invites the follower to get involved with the conversation, suggesting the followers are part of the Castle's 'family' by asking if they recognise the rooms. This tweet reflects Jenkins' (2013) theories around creating fans by integrating the screen narratives into their own social experiences by asking the followers to join in the discussion and answer the question.

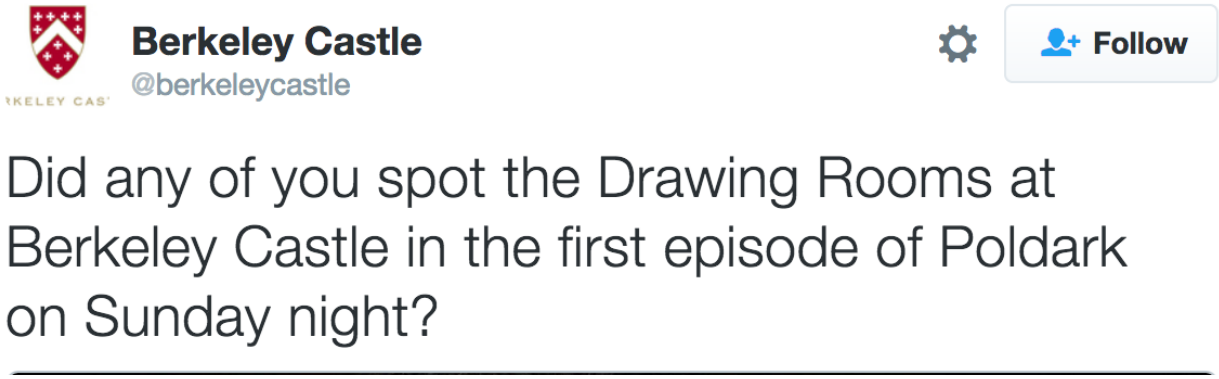


Image 6.5 @BerkeleyCastle Twitter account
(Screenshot captured 12 January 2017 by author)

The social media application Instagram is a popular way to connect with followers and promote screen tourism. As Instagram is visually based, social media managers run into the problems with photographic rights and non-disclosure agreements. Berkeley Castle had no official agreement with the BBC to promote themselves through *Six Wives with Lucy Worsley* (2016), so could not do promotion ahead of time, but once the programme had premiered could utilise imagery for promotion. The visual imagery creates a strong connection between the real historic location and the screen location (which in this case is a Tudor palace). In this situation the connection between the television imagery and narrative and the real house is more complicated as it is from a documentary programme and relates to historical facts. Although Henry VIII did not live at Berkeley Castle, it is a real castle in which Tudors would have lived. For the Berkeley marketing team, there are interwoven stories to be told about the castle as a film set, the connection to real Tudors at the castle and stories about Tudor life in general.

Image 6.6 Berkeley Castle Instagram account
(Screenshot captured 18 August 2017 by author)

Although the screen production controls the narrative of the film or television programme in which the country house is utilised, the social media and marketing online allow the country house management and marketing teams to take back control of how internet followers and viewers engage with the role of the country house in the film or television programme. This online space can allow shifts in perspective for viewers of the country house and invites the fans to engage directly in 'participatory fan culture' (Monk, 2011). The control of the narrative of the individual country house, and the values presented in the narratives on screen, are now filtered through the mitigating content of the social media channels of the individual country house, or national organisation.

6.5.4 Marketing Literature and the Filmic Narratives

Social media and the internet are not the only spaces in which the country house marketing staff can utilise screen imagery and narratives to sell the country house site. Weddings and events are very valuable financially to the country house and the use of the narratives of film and television within commercial marketing materials helps potential clients make a decision about where to book an event or wedding; a film having been shot on location or associated with the location may mean the difference between making the booking and failing. For example, Haddon Hall in Derbyshire played the role of Mr Rochester's house, Thornfield Hall, in the 2011 film *Jane Eyre.* Vikki Stronge (Interview, 2015), Haddon Hall's Project and Visitor Services Manager, described how the romantic nature of *Jane Eyre*, both the book and the film, allowed her to utilise words from the book and scenes from the film in advertising the wedding business. The connection between the book and the film was already robust, and Stronge was able to capitalise on the connection in the visitor's mind to

attract business. She anecdotally felt brides had specifically chosen Haddon Hall because of its association with *Jane Eyre*, so therefore she utilised this association with her wedding marketing. The Haddon Hall website highlights the filming of *Jane Eyre* at Haddon Hall (https://www.haddonhall.co.uk/film-and-photo-shoots/jane-eyre-at-haddon-hall/) and in the 2016 digital wedding brochure for Haddon Hall, Stronge utilised the line from *Jane Eyre* (the novel written by Charlotte Brontë): 'Reader, I married him.' The utilisation of this quote cements the connection between the story of Jane Eyre, the film *Jane Eyre* (2011) and Haddon Hall, specifically as a romantic, nostalgic country house wedding location.

Image 6.7 Final page of the 2016 Haddon Hall Wedding Guide (https://www.haddonhall.co.uk/files/9014/2176/9427/Wedding_Brochure_-_Haddon_Hall-_2014-2015.pdf)
(Screenshot captured 10 August 2019 by author)

6.6 The Visitor Experience: Screen-Inspired Interpretation and Exhibitions

Having now outlined the role of publicity and marketing initiatives in utilising the screen representations of the country house to attract fans to become visitors, and the role this promotion plays in connecting the on-screen narratives and concepts to the real country house sites and the ECH meta-narrative, I will now explore how heritage management teams utilise the film and television representations, narratives and imagery to produce and present visitor experiences at the country house sites themselves. Publicity for country houses from screen productions, and the subsequent marketing programmes by management teams, entice screen audiences to visit the real country house site where the fictional imagery and narratives were created and set. If visitors are drawn to the site by film and television representations, the country house will use film and television imagery and narratives to entertain them while on-site. When the film and television narrative is reproduced on-site, at the location of the 'real' country house, it fixes the fictional narrative to the story of the real country house. This solidifies the film and television narratives as part of the ECH meta-narrative, which is shaped, sustained and distributed by the screen production and its associated popular consumer culture.

Screen-related interpretation and the production of screen-related exhibitions are the clearest ways to utilise film narratives and imagery on-site to attract new audiences. These exhibitions and interpretations maximise the connection between the screen representations and the real country house location because the visitor physically interacts with elements of the screen representation while being on the real country house site. The heritage space is presented to audiences through a connection to the filmic country house,

whether through costume displays from a specific film or an entire exhibition related to the production of one film or television programme. These visitor experiences are influenced by what the heritage managers expect the audiences to want, or what has proven successful in the past. The heritage manager grapples with the maintenance of the historical integrity of the heritage space of the country house and the excitement for visitors of the presentation of screen representations on-site. As discussed in the literature review, the competition for the leisure time of the public is robust, so the country house management teams must always be looking to the next experience or production to continue to draw audiences. The presentation of interpretation experiences to the visitor are the mode through which the values of the individual country house heritage sites are illustrated to the visitor (Moscardo & Ballantyne, 2008), so these visitor experiences will impact the meaning of the country house. This section explores how heritage managers utilise the fictional imagery and narratives of screen productions in the visitor experience on-site at the country house space.

6.6.1 The National Trust

The National Trust is the organisation the British public chiefly associates with the English country house. Due to the taxation of estates in the first half of the twentieth century, large numbers of country houses were given to the National Trust for the nation, and the Trust cares for over 300 historic homes. The National Trust is also a national organisation, with the structure and support of a centralised business and marketing hub, and although each National Trust site operates independently, the sites and site managers benefit from the national recognition and business support teams dealing with marketing, filming,

interpretation, publicity and more. Therefore, when discussing country houses associated with the National Trust, it is essential to remember these sites have extra support and public engagement, which allows the managers to be more creative and innovative with their visitor experience practices.

The following examples are all drawn from film and television exhibitions at National Trust country house sites and highlight the different attitudes of National Trust managers to film and television productions and fictional narratives, but form an overview of how film and television narratives are engaged with at the country house site.

I. *Mr. Turner* (2014) and Petworth Park – A Once-in-a-Lifetime Exhibition

The Exhibition

When the producers of *Mr. Turner* (2014) wanted to work with the National Trust house and estate of Petworth Park, the House and Collections Manager Andrew Loukes (Interview, 2015) saw it as a great opportunity for the site and he immediately planned a strategy. For this film, production was unique – the narrative of *Mr. Turner* was about the famous artist J. M. W. Turner, and the real historical artist spent an amount of time working at Petworth Park and painted the house and the grounds. This is a very rare situation in which the real country house site and its factual history are being translated into a feature film. Loukes worked directly with members of the production crew during the planning and filming of the production, and the production crew agreed to assist in producing an exhibition and catalogue about the making of the film and its importance to Petworth House and Park. Loukes stated in interview, 'This was a once-in-a-lifetime' type of opportunity for Petworth

House. The exhibition, created with the help of the production company, told exciting stories about the reimagining of J. M. W. Turner's life in the film. Loukes felt that anecdotally the visitor numbers increased for this exhibition, with an estimated 200,000 visitors attending. Loukes also noted visitors still ask the room guides about J. M. W. Turner, his connection to Petworth Park and the film *Mr. Turner.*

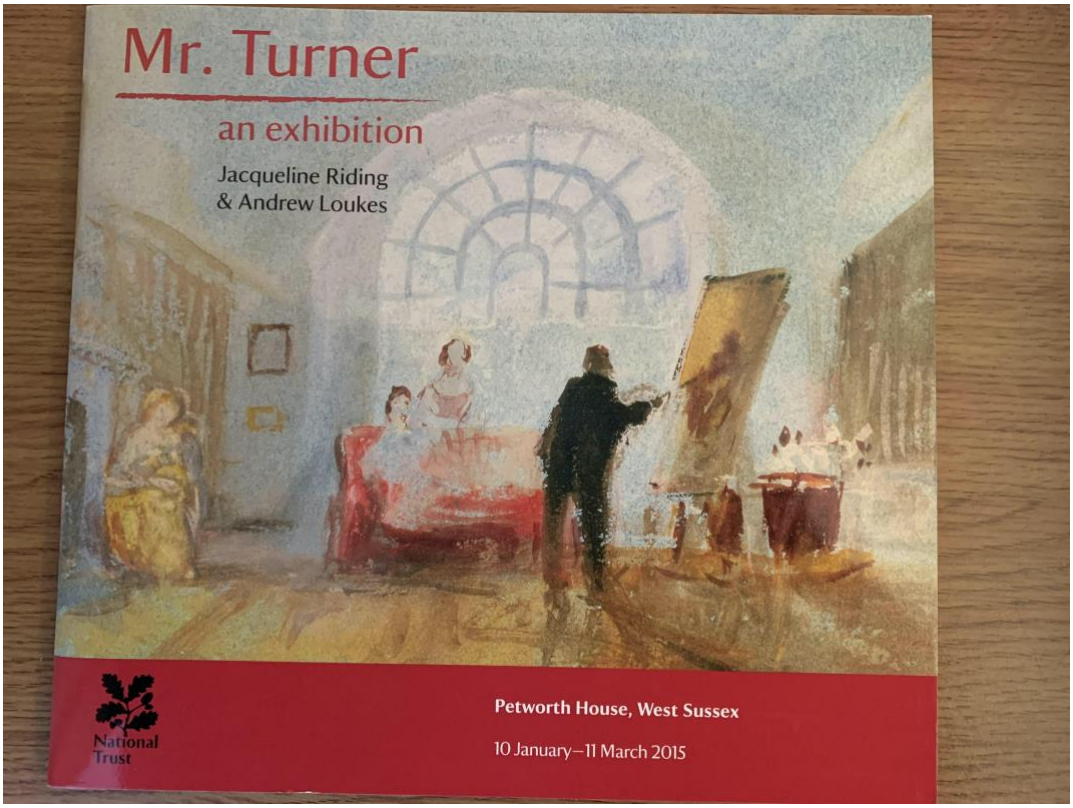
I visited the second instalment of the exhibition, which was smaller than the original and was found in one of the gallery spaces in the servants' area. It incorporated props, videos and explanation panels about the film – interpreting the film, its narratives and its impact on the site. The image below shows a panel describing the director Mike Leigh's view on the film. This exhibition allowed the house management to promote the connection between the film, the house and the real story of J. M. W. Turner, as well as create a new and different heritage interpretation experience on-site. The film exhibition is no longer on show, but the National Trust website continues to promote the connection between the film *Mr. Turner* and Petworth House, as of November 2019.

Image 6.8 *Mr. Turner* exhibition, Petworth Park, 28 September 2015
(Photograph by author)

The Catalogue

Along with the exhibition, Petworth House curators worked with the production team to produce an exhibition catalogue. This catalogue combined stories from the real life of J. M. W. Turner at Petworth with narratives and imagery from the film. The Foreword of the catalogue was written by Mike Leigh, the director of *Mr. Turner* (2014); he wrote specifically about his joy of filming the movie at the place where some of the action historically happened. This statement by Leigh is reflective of the literature on film tourism, both

academic and commercial, wherein visitors want to go 'where the action really happened' by visiting film sets. The catalogue also contains an article by Dr Jacqueline Riding, the research consultant on the film, about the process of making a heritage-inspired film. Riding and Loukes were clever in relating both the process of making a film and the well-researched film narrative into the exhibition; this is more likely to draw diverse audiences. In creating the exhibition and the catalogue, Petworth House managers were producing film-related heritage on the physical house site. This created an integrated identity for Petworth House, of both its real physical and historical attributes, and its place within the *Mr. Turner* film. The Petworth House management team, and the production company, were very shrewd in highlighting the whole process of making the movie and turned it into an exciting, beautiful, feel-good story neatly packaged for public consumption.



Forewords

Having dreamed of making a film about Turner for so many years, and having discussed endlessly with my creative team how and where we could shoot the story, we came up with many an inventive solution – Margate was shot in Cornwall, the Royal Academy in a decaying stately home in Yorkshire, and Turner's Central London house in an even more decrepit old house in Woolwich. One location alone was the real thing – Petworth, where Turner so enjoyed staying. This delightful house played itself with great taste and accuracy. To be able to shoot the scene about Turner and the then Lord Egremont inspecting the artist's four paintings in the actual Carved Room was a film-maker's dream beyond dreams. (These four are the only real Turners in the film, and, truth to tell, working with them did feel a little spooky!) Similar was the sheer joy of reconstructing 'The Artist and his Admirers' in the very room in the picture, the Old Library, which Turner used as his studio. We put the camera in exactly the right spot for Turner's viewpoint, and dramatised the scene. Great fun! To be allowed to take over a location with all the chaos and mayhem that inevitably comes with shooting a movie needs real sympathy and co-operation – and patience – on the part of those responsible for the place, and I have to say that, in nearly fifty years of film-making, I have seldom experienced hosts as helpful and charming as Andy Loukes and his team, as well as Lord and Lady Egremont. Cinematographer Dick Pope lit the evening concert in the Carved Room (all wood!) with hundreds of real candles. Lesser custodians would have had an apoplectic fit, and thrown us off the premises. But not these folk. With their help and support we were able, I hope, to capture the spirit and essence of Petworth House at the time of J.M.W. Turner.

Mike Leigh

Mr. Turner – an exhibition has been inspired by some of the principal themes of Mike Leigh's film, and is an attempt to add elements of supplementary context to it. There are innumerable aspects of J.M.W. Turner's life and art which invite exploration, and *Mr. Turner* represents a compelling distillation of many of them. The exhibition has had to be similarly selective, not least because of determining factors such as limitations of space and availability of loans. As Petworth was happily a major location for *Mr. Turner*, as indeed it was for the artist, it is fitting we have had the opportunity to work again with Thin Man Films on this project. We are particularly grateful to our guest co-curator, Dr Jacqueline Riding, Research Consultant for *Mr. Turner*, who joins me in thanking Mike Leigh, Georgina Lowe, Helen Grearson, Suzie Davies, Charlotte Watts, Simon Mein, Eileen Read, Charlie Cobb, Tim Wright – and Timothy Spall – for their help with the exhibition.

Andrew Loukes

Curator of Collections and Exhibitions, Petworth House and Park (National Trust)

Image 6.9 Images of the *Mr. Turner* exhibition catalogue (Photograph by author)

This was a very successful partnership between a commercial film production and a country house management team, partly due to sensible planning but also the unique relation of Petworth House to the real life of the subject of the film. This is a rare situation for the majority of English country houses involved in film and television projects.

II. Lacock Abbey, Harry Potter *and Embracing the Screen Narrative*

When I first visited Lacock Abbey in August 2015, there was very little interpretation on-site, permanent or temporary, that highlighted, or even mentioned, the numerous commercial film productions with which Lacock Abbey had been involved. The only indication of film and television narratives and imagery on-site was one interpretation placard detailing the filming of the first *Harry Potter* film, of which there is a photograph below.

Image 6.10 'The Harry Potter Films at Lacock' interpretation sign,
Lacock Abbey, 19 August 2015
(Photograph by author)

The management of Lacock Abbey declined to speak to me for my research, apparently due to the centralised National Trust organisation being able to tell me all I needed to know. I

contend that the observational visit I undertook in August 2015 illustrates that the management was uninterested in engaging with film narratives in their presentation of heritage interpretation for the visitor experience. Management may not have been interested in engaging with film and television representations for a multitude of reasons, such as concentrating on the architectural history, the history of the occupants, conservation worries about film tourism or a lack of understanding of the economic impact of film tourism. I can only conjecture the reasoning behind the managerial decisions, but it is interesting to consider and provides a contrasting backdrop to my return visit to Lacock Abbey in July 2016, at which time there were two entirely new screen-related exhibitions.

Exhibition 1: 'On Location at Lacock Abbey' Cabinet

The first film exhibition appeared in a glass cabinet upstairs in the 'museum' house section of Lacock Abbey. This permanent, static exhibition included a display of daily call-sheets from filming on-site, still photographs from filming, small props used in the production, descriptions and photographs of the catering, and served as an overview of the experience of having a film crew on-site. To me, this exhibition appeared a complete reversal of the previous lack of screen-influenced heritage presentations at Lacock Abbey. This exhibition illustrated that Lacock Abbey's management was not only embracing their part in commercial film and television, but the general interest by the public in media production at heritage locations. This exhibition felt like a recognition of the part Lacock Abbey played in many film and television productions and gave film-induced visitors a sneak-peek behind the scenes.

Image 6.11 'Film Cabinet' at Lacock Abbey, 10 July 2016
(Photograph by author)

Exhibition 2: Costumes from The Hollow Crown *(2012–16)*

The second exhibition was located in the Great Hall, the last location visitors see before exiting the Abbey. The exhibition consisted of the costumes used in *The Hollow Crown* (2012–16), a series utilising an adaptation of Shakespeare's works which had recently had a new season premiere on UK domestic television. Costume exhibitions are a popular, so are a frequently used film-related exhibition because costumes are often available from a centralised warehouse and are not owned by the production, so heritage organisations can acquire costumes into the heritage site faster. The image below shows how the costumes were displayed with their adjoining information panels.

Image 6.12*The Hollow Crown* costume exhibition, Lacock Abbey, 10 July 2016 (Photograph by author)

Costumes from *The Hollow Crown* are not connected historically with Lacock Abbey itself or the people who lived there, only with a television programme having filmed there. Yet, the apparent historical context of the clothing is reminiscent of historical people and could be connected to a house of this type. With a relation to Shakespeare, a connection is made between the costumes of *The Hollow Crown* and English history; there is also a connection between Lacock Abbey and English history. The use of images from the television programme on the interpretation boards further brings the narratives to life within the context of the historic house. Therefore, there is a simple path for tourists to follow mentally of connecting the images and themes of *The Hollow Crown* exhibition and the narratives of the television programme itself to Lacock Abbey through 'historicalness'. I would argue the management team of Lacock Abbey is looking to control the commercial and cultural values of their country house asset and utilising film tourism to engage new audiences with Lacock Abbey, rather than taking the stance of a problematic commercialisation of history or nostalgia. There may be some blurring of lines between the real site and the costumes on display, but the overall impact is one of engagement with history, and, for Lacock Abbey, engagement in the physical space of this English country house.

III. On Location at Basildon Park: Close to the London Film Scene

The Exhibition

Basildon Park, located in Berkshire not far from the M25, lies in the ideal place for London-based film and television productions, as was discussed in Chapter 4. As such, it was one of the examples Harvey Edgington (Interview, 2015) discussed in his interview with me as a popular filming location for the National Trust. It is important to note that while the National Trust works as one body to oversee film projects, each country house is managed independently from the central office, and therefore Basildon Park makes its own choices when it comes to exhibitions and heritage production. During my visit in June 2016, the management had designed an entire room dedicated to all of the media in which the house and estate had participated. This included image panels, costumes, a binder full of images and texts from films, excerpts from newspapers and magazines, call sheets and other film-related paraphernalia. The images below are just two examples of the interpretation available in the film room. As Basildon Park is used so often in film and television, it is likely they have a good understanding of film tourism practices and the need to produce heritage visitor experiences that meet audience expectations.

Image 6.13
Images from Film Exhibition at Basildon Park, 18 June 2016
(Photographs by author)

This exhibition showcases how country house management teams can utilise the film publicity, imagery and narratives to tell new stories about their site. The management have produced this interpretation on-site at Basildon Park, and looked reflexively at how Basildon Park has been 'reimagined' in film and television (as seen in the first image). This exhibition does not relate to the historic past of the country house itself, yet the images and narratives of the films shot at Basildon Park are heritage costume dramas. This gives an innate historicity to the exhibition, and if visitors have already consumed Basildon Park on screen in a heritage drama, they will consume it through that lens on-site. This exhibition allows those visitors to meet their screen-related expectation but also places Basildon Park within the historic contexts of these fictional narratives. This is an instance where there may be a blurring of lines between the fictional screen narratives and the historic Basildon Park narrative.

In the House

Inside Basildon Park house, screen narratives are incorporated in a more provocative way. The previously mentioned film exhibition is located in an outer building which opens onto the gardens, and does not offer any historical interpretation, making it a stand-alone film exhibition. On the tour through the historical rooms at Basildon, there are three items which utilise screen narratives within the historic museum space of the country house. On first entering the house, the visitor is greeted with a framed photograph of the *Downton Abbey* cast. This is shown in the image below.

Image 6.14 *Downton Abbey* cast photo, Basildon Park, 18 June 2016
(Photograph by author)

For many visitors, these people will be recognised as the cast of *Downton Abbey* (2010–15), though for others there is likely to be no such recognition. This image is likely placed here because many scenes of *Downton Abbey* were shot on location at Basildon Park. Problematically, this image is placed without any accompanying interpretation signage to detail this as a television cast, and it is placed just like a family photo within the confines of the historical house, much like the photos that were presented further along in the tour. This photograph presents an opportunity for the visitor to confuse the image and the people in the image with real occupants of Basildon Park, and even if the visitor recognises

the cast, it is still presented to be consumed as part of the historical story of the house. I argue this photography is purposefully meant to be misleading to capitalise on the value of *Downton Abbey* and make film tourism visitors more engaged with their surroundings through the lens of *Downton Abbey*.

Also, in main entrance of the house I encountered a book about Basildon Park and its use as a filming location. This book was related to the exhibition located in the outer building described earlier. The aim of the book is to help visitors understand how Basildon Park has been used in film and television and create an exciting experience for the visitor as they move through the house and see the locations from many films. The use of this book helps the visitor understand the *Downton Abbey* photograph and connect it to the film narrative, rather than the narrative of the house. Yet by placing this filming-oriented book within the core historical area of the house, the management team is utilising the excitement of film and television to engage visitors with their experience in the traditional historic interior space and harness the power of film tourism.

Image 6.15 'On Location at Basildon Park', 18 June 2016
(Photograph by author)

On moving to the dining room, I encountered another film-related item; this time a decidedly commercial product created specifically around a screen narrative. The *Downton Abbey*-labelled red wine was sitting on a dresser to the side of the main dining table; it was left as though just used on the dinner table, presented without any interpretation to its film narrative. The use of this wine bottle is likely similar to the image of the *Downton Abbey* cast in the photo frame; it utilises the film narrative in a simple way that mirror the historical interior of the country house. In the programme, the fictional *Downton Abbey* family drink claret with dinner, much like a family living at Basildon would have done. The display of the *Downton Abbey* wine at a genuine country house location verifies *Downton*

Abbey (2010–15) as an accurate source of history on the country house. This combination of the original, physical country house and fictional ECH meta-narrative country house on-site amalgamates the fictional *Downton Abbey* narratives with the real Basildon Park. The bottle of *Downton Abbey* wine is also a commercial product, available for purchase (http://downtonabbeywine.com/), so presents another reflection of the value of screen tourism. *Downton Abbey*, as an extremely popular representation of an English Country House and historic English countryside life, furthers develops the ECH meta-narrative and augments the popular culture presentations and meanings of the English Country House. Commercial products and their relationship to heritage spaces will be discussed further in Chapter 6. The value of film tourism, and meeting film tourism expectations, drives the management to blur the lines between the fictional narratives of *Downton Abbey* and the historical narratives of Basildon Park, and this is easily done due to the historical costume drama element of the fictional narrative being utilised. *Downton Abbey* becomes a real narrative and creates a hyper-real (Baudrillard, 1994) space within Basildon Park.

Image 6.16 *Downton Abbey* wine at Basildon Park, 18 June 2016
(Photograph by author)

These three example locations are all National Trust properties, and although independent choices are made by the management of each country house site, decisions are influenced by the National Trust attitude towards film, television and screen tourism. As exemplified in

the interviews with Tony Berry and Harvey Edgington (Interviews, 2015), Visitor Experience Director and Head of Filming and Locations at the National Trust respectively, the National Trust is aware of the potential of the impact of screen tourism on increasing audience awareness and visitor numbers, which can result in increased income generation. When each of these sites utilises screen-related exhibitions or popular culture products in the visitor experiences on-site, they meet the expectations of film tourists and help fix the fictional narratives of the screen production, including those developed values of the ECH meta-narrative, to the real country house site. These examples illustrate the conundrum: are the public visiting the historic country house (Basildon, Lacock Abbey) or the fictional site (Downton Abbey, a Shakespearean Castle)? The storylines of the film or television programme and the story of the country house can become blurred for the visitor; yet this is commercially sensible for the country house as visitors buy into this amalgamated version of the country house.

6.6.2 Downton Abbey as played by Highclere Castle: The House of the ECH Meta-Narrative

As *Downton Abbey* has just been discussed in the context of Basildon Park, this section deals with the main location of the *Downton Abbey* (2010–15) television programme – Highclere Castle. *Downton Abbey* is one of the most popular heritage television programmes in recent memory, with an estimated global audience of 120 million people in 2013 (Cuccinello, 2016), spawning merchandise, literature and experiences and a permanent place within the country house popular culture canon. References to *Downton Abbey* and 'the *Downton Abbey* effect' (Cox, 2018) are found across the interviews and in casual conversation

throughout my work. For many, Downton Abbey *is* the archetypal English Country House, and therefore represents the ECH meta-narrative in its entirety.

In the opening credits of the television programme, a shot of the elevation of Highclere Castle is used and shows the building in full. The outline of the building is then utilised in silhouette with the title words *Downton Abbey*. I would argue the use of the building in the opening credits, both in imagery and silhouette, make the viewer understand the image of Highclere Castle as the representation of Downton Abbey. Although Highclere Castle is the 'actor' playing Downton Abbey, to the television viewer Highclere Castle *is* Downton Abbey.

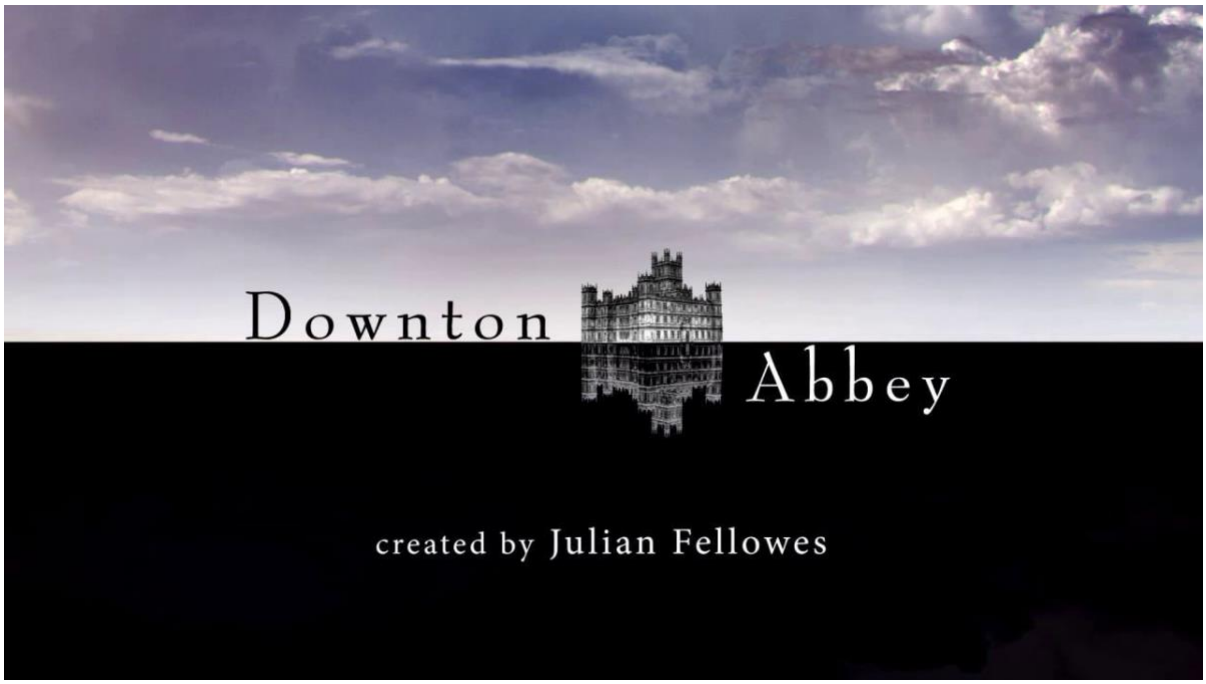


Image 6.17 Still of *Downton Abbey* opening credits
(https://vimeo.com/17673150)
(Accessed 14 July 2019)

In one interview, a participant shared with me that the management of Highclere Castle was less than content with the close relationship between Highclere Castle and its fictional counterpart and the narratives of the fictional television programme. The ease with which the equivalence between Highclere Castle and *Downton Abbey* is made is due both to the integral role the house plays in the narrative and the imagery and the popularity of the television programme globally. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, the popularity of a television programme, and the size of its audience, may determine how closely related the real heritage site and the fictional narrative become. As *Downton Abbey* is so popular across the world, so too is Highclere Castle. For the Highclere Castle management there is a drive to help visitors engage with the factual history of Highclere Castle and the Carnarvon family that live there. This includes the expedition to King Tutankhamen's tomb, of which a previous Lord Carnarvon was a part; Highclere Castle has an entire exhibition on this story in the basement of the house. This factual history is overshadowed by the popular culture response to the heritage narratives of *Downton Abbey*, which is out of the Highclere management team's control.

The house-visiting experience reflects the separation of the *Downton Abbey* narrative from the factual narrative of the house. Highclere Castle is a privately owned stately home, and still lived in by the Carnarvon family, making it a different visitor experience to that of a National Trust 'museum' house. Tickets are timed to enter the house, and no photography is allowed. On my journey through Highclere Castle, there was very little reference to *Downton Abbey*; there were a few placards labelled 'Lady Mary's Room' or 'Lady Sybil's Room' as well as a couple of framed images of the cast among the family photographs.

Highclere Castle itself very much presented the visitor experience as one of a traditional English country house, owned and lived in privately, rather than a museum or film tourism experience. The addition of the framed photographs, mixed with family photographs, speaks to an attempt to make *Downton Abbey* part of the Highclere story, rather than the combination of *Downton Abbey* and Highclere Castle as one.

Commercial Products and Downton Abbey

The giftshop at Highclere Castle presents a very different experience to visiting the house. Although not utilised in the traditional heritage experience in the house, the giftshop is a commercial space and the management of Highclere Castle understand the impact of the television programme and its commercial value and utilise the *Downton Abbey* name and imagery in popular culture-based merchandise. The three images below illustrate the use of the *Downton Abbey* name and all it represents (commercial value, cultural value, the ECH meta-narrative). Three books utilise the name *Downton Abbey* in the title – *Highclere Castle: Home of the Real Downton Abbey; Lady Almina and the Real Downton Abbey;* and *At Home at Highclere: Entertaining at the Real Downton Abbey* – suggesting the name is recognisable, commercially valuable and helps the customer understand the context of the book. Noticeably, all three books include the wording 'the real Downton Abbey'; this suggests that *Downton Abbey* is more recognisable than Highclere Castle, or any real country house, and Downton Abbey represents what visitors and buyers are interested in purchasing. Downton Abbey represents the English Country House. The phrase 'the Real Downton Abbey' signifies the hyper-real state that Highclere Castle inhabits, somewhere between its physical self and factual story and its fictional part played in the *Downton Abbey* narrative.

Image 6.18 *Highclere Castle: Home of the Real Downton Abbey*,
Highclere Castle gift shop, 9 August 2015
(Photograph by author)

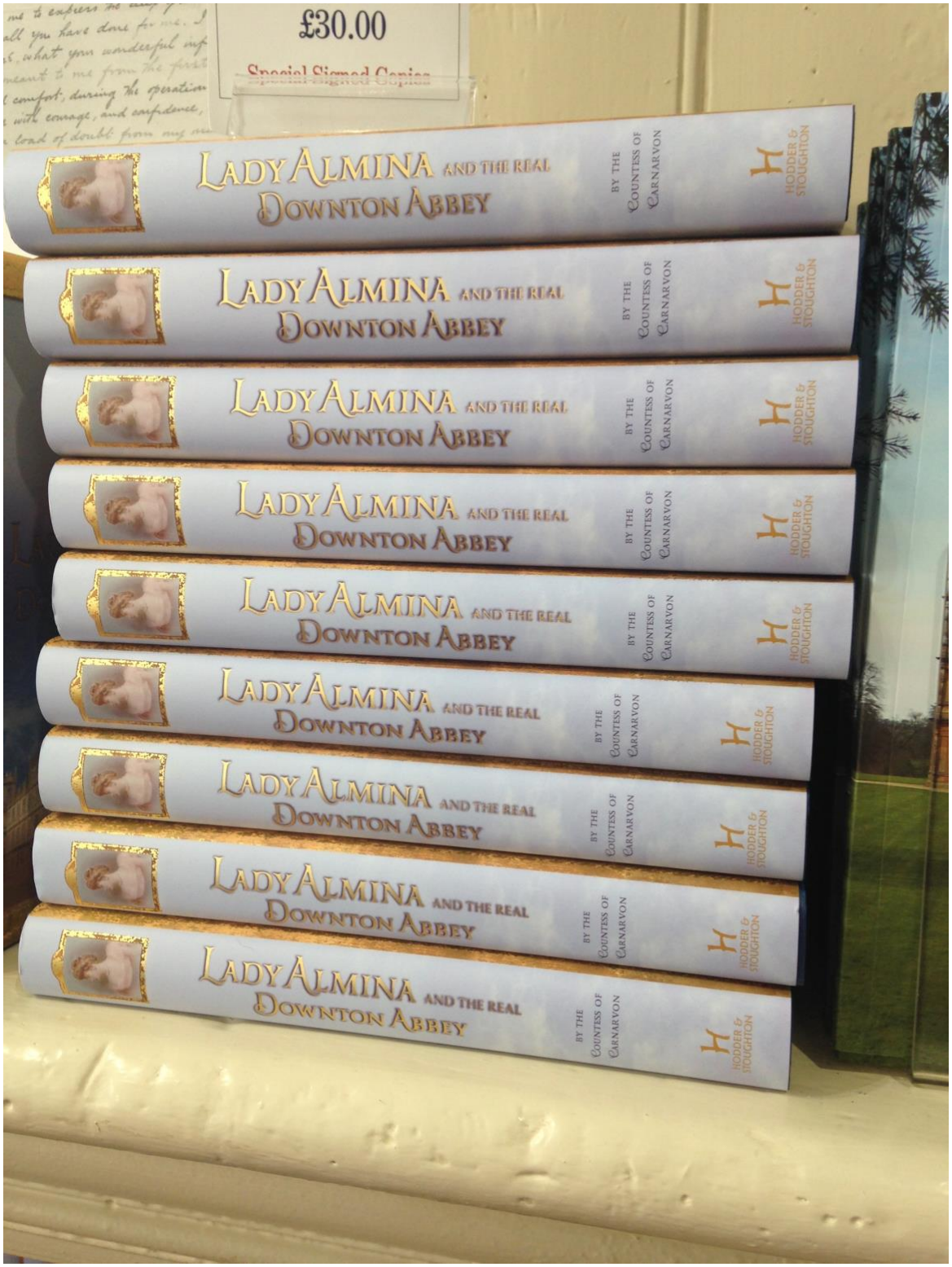


Image 6.19 *Lady Almina and the Real Downton Abbey*,
Highclere Castle gift shop, 9 August 2015
(Photograph by author)

Image 6.20 @HighclereCastle Twitter post
(Screenshot captured 15 March 2017 by author)

On the walls of the giftshop are large stills from the filming of *Downton Abbey* at Highclere Castle; there is no avoiding the narrative of *Downton Abbey* in the commercial space.

Image 6.21
Still from *Downton Abbey*,
Highclere Castle gift shop, 9 August 2015
(Photograph by author)

This exemplifies how commercially valuable, and powerful, the *Downton Abbey* representation is – the clear use of the television programme in the commercial space is for the owners of Highclere Castle to reap the commercial benefits of participating in a successful television programme. The use of screen narratives and imagery provide management with new stories to sell to the public; the country house has traditionally utilised historical and popular culture narratives to sell themselves to the public from the inception of country house visiting and the country house becoming part of the leisure

market (Tinniswood, 1998). The limited use of *Downton Abbey* themes within the house – the 'cultural' space – also illustrates how influential the cultural narratives of *Downton Abbey* are, as in the area that tells the 'real' history of the country house – Highclere Castle itself – the fictional narratives are restricted. Presentation of the English Country House in popular culture, and the strength of desire for their consumption, means each country house grapples with the decisions of engagement with the generalised ECH meta-narrative representation on screen. The cultural values of this popular culture country house can be problematic, twisting the country house into a nostalgic, dreamlike space, while the commercial value of the ECH meta-narrative in popular culture is worth the engagement.

6.6.3 Film-Induced Production of Visitor Experiences and Interpretation

This section explores the different ways country house management teams utilise film and television representations, their imagery and narratives to attract visitors, likely engaging new audiences and new demographics. Through a series of examples from my fieldwork, site visits and interviews, this section will illustrate how beneficial utilising the screen representations of the country house are for income generation and visitor engagement, but also how the country house management seeks to control the cultural values produced by the popular culture ECH meta-narrative and bring them back to engagement with the real country house.

I. Costume Exhibitions

As discussed in the example from Lacock Abbey, costume exhibitions are one of the most common ways country houses and other historic sites utilise screen imagery to promote

themselves. Lucy Abraham (Interview, 2015), Assistant Visitor Experience Manager for Ham House, told me that getting costumes was much easier than acquiring stills or other film props. Ham House was a location in the film *Anna Karenina* (2012) and the management produced an exhibition of the gowns from this film. The exhibition was picked up by both the Sky and BBC television networks on their news programmes, giving Ham House greater reach to new audiences and publicity opportunities. The film *Anna Karenina* is based in Russia, meaning Ham House, an English country house, is 'playing' a Russian location. Utilising the imagery and narrative from *Anna Karenina* through the costume exhibition equates the English country house with Russia and could prove confusing for visitors or for the meaning of the English historic house. This conflation of Russian and English county houses further complicates the ECH meta-narrative, in that not only is the English country house impacted by its roles on screen, but can be confused with foreign country house spaces. Nevertheless, costumes are by definition a piece of performance, so costume exhibitions occupy a space that speaks directly to fiction, perhaps making these exhibitions less connected between the real country house and its fictional counterpart.

II. Film Retrospectives

Another option undertaken by a number of houses interviewed is a film retrospective exhibition, which is when a film is made about the many exhibitions or events that have been undertaken in connection with film and television and those films and television programmes themselves. Neil Cole (Interview, 2015) of Osterley House was very pleased with an exhibition, called 'Real to Reel', he undertook highlighting Osterley House and Park's involvement with a number of different media, including feature films like *The Dark Knight*

Rises (2012), heritage costume dramas like *Doctor Thorne* (2016) and even music videos from Girls Aloud ('Beautiful 'Cause You Love Me', (2012)). 'Real to Reel' (2012) was designed to showcase Osterley's important relationship with media producers over the past 50 years, and how productive commercially this partnership can be for heritage organisations. A film was also made about the exhibition, and a screenshot from the film is shown below. The 'Real to Reel' exhibition and film showcase the shrewd commercial awareness of the management at Osterley House in utilising film narratives and the exciting relationship with film and television production to attract new visitors, and specifically screen tourists, to Osterley. It could be argued Osterley House is taking back control of their own narrative by utilising the film and television images and stories to tell their own experiences with screen media.

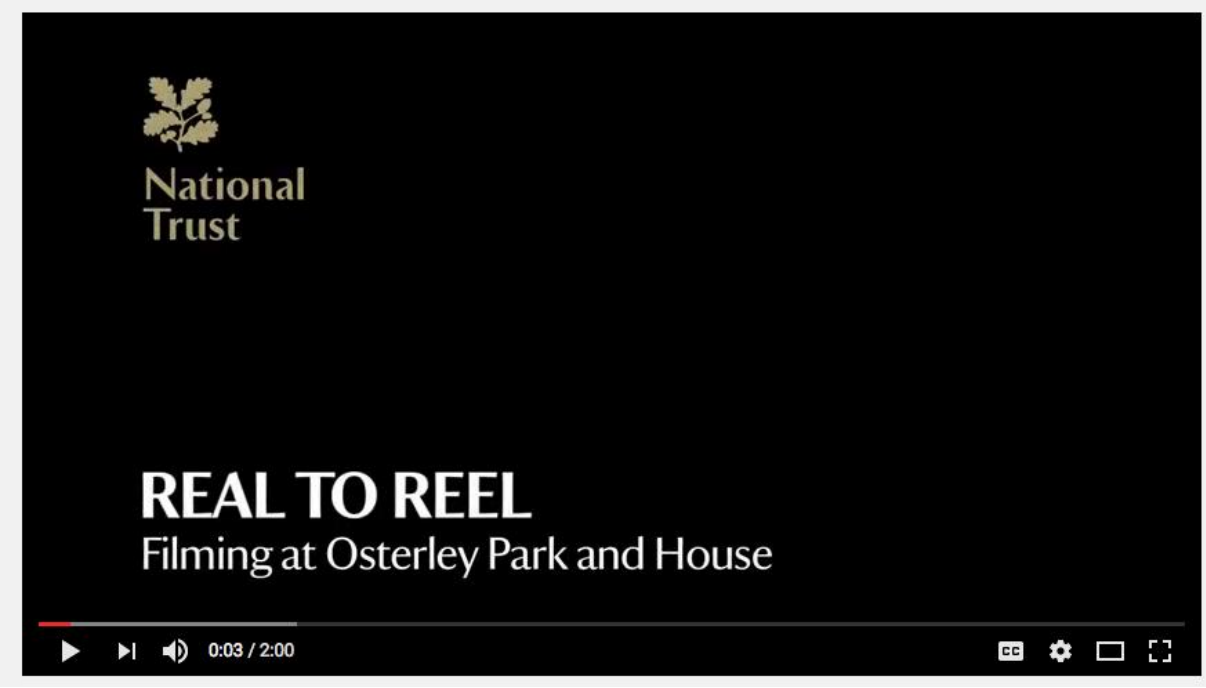


Image 6.22 Still of 'Real to Reel' (2012)
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVEjd5LlFEU)
(Screenshot captured 21 August 2017 by author)

When I met with David Littlewood (Interview 2015), Estate Manager of Eastnor Castle, he told me they were interested in creating a film retrospective exhibition very like the one Osterley produced. As an independent, privately owned country house, Eastnor Castle does not have the same access to marketing and infrastructure as Osterley. Although Littlewood already incorporates interpretation on the walls of the visitor area of the castle describing its role in films, as well as an extensive filming section on the website, Littlewood (as of 2015) wanted to highlight Eastnor's diverse filming credits and was inspired to do this by the interest from visitors. The exhibition was planned to include images of Sammy Davis Jr coming up the drive in a car in *One More Time* (1970), Slade's 'Run Runaway' music video (1984) and the very well-known appearance by Eastnor Castle in *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1995). I have not, however, seen evidence that this exhibition ever came together.

III. Guided Tours and Personal Interpretation

Film and television imagery and narratives are often incorporated into the talks and tours given by house and room guides. These may be formal tours, wherein the senior management includes film and television stories or narratives into the tour, or informal, wherein the individual tour guide finds that incorporating stories from 'set' or the fictional narratives from the screen into the tour patter is favourably received by visitors. In interviewing heritage managers at country house sites, I found they did not specifically write film and television stories into the tour guides' training; rather the tour guides found these stories were interesting to visitors and incorporated them into the tours – the stories added

a new angle to the visitor experience. A few heritage manager interviewees, such as Tony Berry and Roland Brown (Interviews, 2015) discussed a reluctance by guides to talk about filming experiences at historic houses, as some guides, often described as older in age, felt that film and television was too 'low culture' to be part of the guided tour and that visitors should hear only the 'high culture' and real social history of the house.

My experience, both working on location and through observational fieldwork, reflects the excitement of film narrative in the visitor tour experience. At Osterley Park, often used in film and television programmes and the site of the 'Real to Reel' exhibition described above, my tour guide was very keen to tell the group about the filming of *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012) and told the tour a story about how the real secret door in the library was utilised by the art department in the film and designed to look, on screen, like it led into the 'batcave'. The guide enjoyed asking the tour group if we could figure out what was special in the room, and when we failed to notice the hidden door took pleasure in pointing it out to us. This tour guide had found an element of the fictional narrative and the film experience to utilise in her tour and utilised it in a way that engaged with the real historic house as well. Although the group may not have been seeking a screen tourism experience, I observed the general consensus of the group was positive towards this novel, film-related information.

I had a similar experience at Great Chalfield Manor, a privately owned National Trust property in the West Country. I took a guided tour, and the guide was very keen to share stories from the many films that have taken place at Great Chalfield, including *Wolf Hall* (2015) and *The Other Boleyn Girl* (2008). Again, I observed pleasure from the assembled group in hearing 'behind the scenes' stories about film experiences, including the need for

the art department to find faded upholstery and fabric to make audiences believe the film was in the past. The tour group, and guide, particularly enjoyed the stories about paparazzi trying to get photographs of famous people on set, and the owner of Great Chalfield was also very keen to discuss his experiences with filming and his use of film images and narratives in his static interpretation panels.

These exhibitions and interpretations, both static and live, maximise the connection between the screen representations and the real country house location, and this is worthwhile for the heritage managers because of the value of the screen representation and the country house in popular culture, in that it brings in new audiences and returning audiences, with new experiences and engagements. The narratives of the house and the film and television productions are intrinsically linked, and the visitor expects, and enjoys, these narratives as part of the visitor experience. If the heritage manager feels power over the narrative of the country house site is lost when playing a part in a commercial screen production, then utilising those commercial narratives at the site returns some of the control to the heritage site itself by reaping the benefits. In utilising the film and television representations on-site and acknowledging the place of the country house within these narratives, the country house management takes some control over the meaning, and the cultural value, of their own story and can mould the narrative to be more in line with the story and brand they want visitors to experience.

6.7 Movie Maps: Utilising Screen Representations to Drive Visitor Engagement

Movie maps and film trails, produced either by a national organisation like the National Trust or VisitBritain, or within one estate, offer an opportunity for visitors to physically and mentally engage with film and television imagery and narratives while visiting the locations from screen, as well as relive the experiences they may have felt while watching the films. Movie maps lay out the locations from either one screen production, or many screen productions, so visitors can attend the site, take photographs and feel the connection to the screen narrative. This fan-like motivation to visit the spaces from the screen production is reflected in Jenkins' (2013) theories around fans trespassing into the narrative and these screen representations becoming part of the visitors' own lived experience and memory. Viewers have emotional and mental reactions while watching film and television, and the moments may be significant in their lives, so the opportunity to visit these places creates a positive reinforcement of these memories. It also creates a connection between the real country house location and the fictional location in the mind of the consumer, further fixing these two narratives into one.

Movie maps do not require an exhibition space or a large cost overhead to produce. As the movie maps are not designed as a static element of visitor experience, the connection between the film and the country house site is not driven by the production of heritage experiences from film and television, but rather the choice of the visitor to utilise the movie map to bring their own experiences of the fictional narratives to the country house site. Without the film experience being forced on the visitor physically, the movie maps allow the heritage manager to use film and television narratives in a simple way, and the map lets the

stories from the screen productions, and the visitor-viewers' interpretation of them, lead the experience. Vikki Stronge (Interview 2015), from Haddon Hall, told me in detail about visitors recreating scenes from *The Princess Bride* (1987) or *Jane Eyre* (2011) for photographs and videos when visiting the country house, and posting these images on social media. This illustrates the visitors' engagement with their own narratives of the films on-site and sharing this with their communities. A movie map helps the visitor find the right location to re-create or represent the film experience, and the heritage location re-packages their assets without changing the physical experience for visitors who are not interested in screen tourism. As de Groot (2009) discussed, audiences desire to connect with history personally, and the movie maps give them the chance to get involved directly with the history from screen and on the site.

6.7.1 Movie Maps as Visitor Engagement Marketing

The National Trust produced an extensive movie map for the premiere of *Wolf Hall* (2015) on UK domestic television; below are some images taken from the movie map. This programme was based on very well-known books by Hilary Mantel, and there was lots of publicity across on the main UK media channels about the programme before it aired. In interview (2015) with Harvey Edgington, we discussed the sheer number of country houses required for the filming of Wolf Hall, and although not all met the time-period needs perfectly, they were all located in the Southwest of England, where filming was taking place. This allowed the creation of a detailed movie map, which fans of *Wolf Hall* could follow across the Southwest, and the National Trust successfully repackaged their own historic houses into an easily distributed piece of film interpretation. The movie map is relatively

simple to create, as in the example from *Wolf Hall* below, where the majority of images are of the houses themselves, with only a few from the production of the television programme. This means the cost of rights to photography was at a minimum and the text descriptions could be used to connect the fictional locations to the real locations. This movie map's success puts the focus back on the houses and the experiences of visiting, rather than solely on the fictional narratives. Although I have no impact assessment for the *Wolf Hall* movie map, it was widely promoted across National Trust publicity and is likely to have attracted new audiences and created new experiences at the country house sites.

Image 6.23 Page 2 of the National Trust's *Wolf Hall* movie map displaying National Trust locations

Another example comes from Blenheim Palace, a privately owned country estate that plays a part as a location in a number of famous films such as *Spectre* (2015), *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2007) and *The BFG* (2016). The management of Blenheim Palace have produced a movie map aimed at visitors interested in screen media and narratives. This map particularly explores film locations both inside the house and within the grounds, allowing visitors to make their own way to their favourite site, and perhaps recreate a scene or re-live an emotion they felt when watching the film or television programme. Without creating an interpretation or presenting the house as a filming location, film and television tourists are able to engage with the fictional narratives and production stories. By creating the movie map separate to the static interpretation, Blenheim mitigates the risk of negative feelings towards film and television narratives interspersed with factual histories. Heritage managers contend with what Croy and Heitmann (2011) suggest is a growing distrust of film and television representations, and the use of these narratives could give a negative feeling to visitors who are not interested in film and television representations.

Image 6.24a
Blenheim Palace's movie map

Image 6.24b
Blenheim Palace's movie map

6.7.2 Fan Blogs as Movie Maps

To illustrate the commercial and cultural value of the country house on screen, and its importance to visitors and fans, it is useful to have a look at heritage-related blogs. Some visitors are bloggers, and a couple of blogs provide good examples of visitors finding locations and recreating scenes.

I. Make Do & Mend (http://makedo-and-mend.blogspot.co.uk/2016/04/a-trip-to-haddon-hall-aka-prince.html) (Accessed: 18 April 2019)

This blogger posts about her trip to Haddon Hall in 2016, wherein she visited 'Prince Humperdinck's Castle' from *The Princess Bride* and recreates some of the scenes from the film. She notes on this blog entry that 'although there wasn't really any references to the film at the hall (besides the DVD in the shop!) it was a lovely afternoon which I would recommend to any film or history lovers!' She has brought her expectations as a film fan to her visit to Haddon Hall and is surprised by the lack of presentation of the film experience. For Make Do & Mend, the lack of film interpretation wasn't problematic enough to create a bad experience, but it had the potential to do so. Had she felt disappointed by the experience, and not had an emotional connection to the film on-site, this could result in bad publicity for Haddon Hall. Alternatively, had there been an overabundance of film-related interpretation, she might also have had a negative reaction. The blogger is crossing the line between the real Haddon Hall and the fictional Prince Humperdinck's Castle, without any interpretation produced to induce her to make this connection. This illustrates the power of emotional connection between the viewer and the film representation and their reaction to visiting the site. There is a discordance in the mind of the viewer between the real Haddon Hall and 'Prince Humperdinck's Castle', but this discordance creates a positive experience for this blogger.


MONDAY, 11 APRIL 2016

A TRIP TO HADDON HALL (AKA PRINCE HUMPERDINCK'S CASTLE IN THE PRINCESS BRIDE)

"Have fun storming the castle!"

Image 6.25 'A Trip to Haddon Hall'
(http://makedo-and-mend.blogspot.com/2016/04/a-trip-to-haddon-hall-aka-prince.html)
(Screenshot captured 18 April 2019 by author)

II. All Jane Austen all the time

(http://alljaneaustenallthetime.tumblr.com/post/94826006332/waywardhuffl epuff-pride-and-prejudice-1995 (Accessed: 21 August 2017)

This blogger has a page dedicated specifically to *Pride and Prejudice* and offers internet visitors the chance to see images from the films in front of the real locations. The image below shows how the blogger explains the connections pictorially to the readers of the blog. These types of pages serve as unofficial movie maps, helping interested visitors place film

scenes at the real location and demonstrating the potential use of them in heritage presentation and interpretation. Blogs like this help the visitor place themselves within the fictional narrative, at the real location, imbuing the historic site with the fictional screen narrative meaning as well as their own experiences like Jenkins' (2013) fans. The visitors/bloggers become the interpreters and heritage producers themselves, leading other visitors on tours. The ability to place oneself within the scene illustrates the power of the country house in popular culture and blurs the lines between the real country house site and its representation in film. This is especially complicated when it is a heritage costume drama, where the stories of the real and the fictional country house are closely aligned.

Image 6.26 Photo of *Pride and Prejudice* (1995) over an image of Lyme Park (http://alljaneaustenallthetime.tumblr.com/post/94826006332/waywardhufflepuff-pride-and-prejudice-1995)
(Screenshot captured 21 August 2017 by author)

6.8 Commercial Events and Commercial Products: Screen Narratives for Sale

Film and television visitor experiences and products are not only created by the heritage managers of country houses, they are also created by outside commercial organisations seeking to capitalise on the value of the country house on screen and in popular culture. This section explores the places, events and products that are fully commercial experiences designed to capitalise on the power and value of the commercial country house and the meanings associated with the ECH meta-narrative. This section explores other screen

narratives as commercial events or products, and how these further amalgamate the English Country House with its screen representations, creating the blurred lines between fiction and reality.

6.8.1 Special Events and Experiences

'The Music from Bond – Live at Blenheim Palace' (2017) illustrates how country houses can utilise film associations to throw events outside of the traditional production of the heritage visitor experience. *Spectre* (2015) was filmed partly at Blenheim Palace, and therefore the association between 'the Music from Bond' and the location is available to be capitalised on. Although concert events are common at country house sites, they are often classical music-orientated or take the form of a music festival in the grounds, using the country house as a setting. However, the *Bond* concert at Blenheim Palace specifically engaged with the narrative of filming the most recent James Bond cinematic release (*Spectre*) at Blenheim Palace to make the event more exciting and more connected to the site itself. As Blenheim Palace uses promotion which publicises itself as a *Spectre* location, a concert with musical themes from Bond fits perfectly into their branding strategy. The website advertising the concert specifically mentions the filming of *Spectre* at Blenheim Palace, and the management have neatly repackaged their heritage site into a *Bond* site. As the *Bond* films have a distinctly British/English characterisation, they fit into the nostalgic Englishness-ness of the country house. This means the representation brings Blenheim Palace within the ECH meta-narrative.

Image 6.27 'The Music from Bond – Live at Blenheim Palace'
(http://www.nocturnelive.com/news/music-from-bond)
(Screenshot captured 21 August 2017 by author)

Sometimes a location chooses to make itself an entire commercial experience. One instance is worth mentioning wherein a whole castle decided to become the '*Downton Abbey* Experience'. Although the castle is located in Scotland, the narrative of *Downton Abbey* and its consumption is decidedly English. According to an article in the *Daily Mail* (Smith & McLelland, 9 March 2016), Dundas Castle in Scotland produced a special '*Downton Abbey* Experience' at the cost of £3,000. Visitors were welcomed to enjoy both the 'downstairs' and the 'upstairs' experiences: downstairs experiences included polishing silver, cooking and baking, while the upstairs experience followed, with shooting on the estate and fine dining

with the owners of the castle. While Dundas Castle did not appear in the programme *Downton Abbey*, the shrewd management were able to capitalise on the popularity of country house life as demonstrated by the popularity of *Downton Abbey* itself, especially from foreign audiences, which the article describes as the main market for the experience.

This commercial visitor experience is an example of the fictional screen narratives being utilised at the country house site, and the use of *Downton Abbey* to name the experience shows how the ECH meta-narrative includes all country houses (or even country house-like spaces) into its mythology. The commercial power of *Downton Abbey*, and the ECH meta-narrative *Downton Abbey* represents, is so strong it inspires overseas visitors to go to Scotland. The ECH meta-narrative is so nostalgic and romanticised through fictional narratives that people will pay to shine silver and wash dishes. The management of Dundas Castle chose to create a hyper-real experience at the physical location and merge the fictional *Downton Abbey* with the real Dundas Castle. I would consider this the most extreme experience of conflating a real historic house with the fictional narratives of screen media, wherein visitors are asked to literally 'live' the fictional narrative.

6.8.2 Commercial Products: Bringing the Screen Narrative Home

Commercial products produced in relation to the screen narratives play on the level of interest in the popular cultural representations of the country house on screen and the ECH meta-narrative. These products allow the consumer to bring the fictionalised narratives of the country house into their own homes and create independent engagement and reactions to the country house narratives away from the country house site. The purchase of

products, like the *Downton Abbey* wine discussed earlier in the chapter, reinforces the connection between the screen representation, the ECH meta-narrative and the commercial value of these two spaces.

As discussed, *Downton Abbey* is an extremely popular television programme and has inspired a number of commercial products. *Downton Abbey* plays on all the tropes of the ECH meta-narrative's associated meanings, so *Downton Abbey*, and Highclere Castle, represent the ECH meta-narrative in its full extent. These products allow the purchaser to imaginatively live within the narrative of *Downton Abbey*, perhaps imagining themselves as a Duke or Duchess. These commercial products include beauty sets, candles and even the *Downton Abbey* bathroom set.

Image 6.28 *Downton Abbey* bath set sold by Marks & Spencer
(Screenshot captured 18 April 2019 by author)

Although the majority of commercial items I have seen that are associated with the fictional screen narratives of heritage dramas are from *Downton Abbey*, the programme *Poldark* (2015–19), which also films at a number of country houses in the Southwest and is heavily

promoted by the National Trust and Cornwall tourism organisations, has spawned commercial fictional heritage products such as these ale pints and jugs.

Image 6.29 *Poldark* Ale Hamper, Devonhampers.com
(Accessed: 18 April 2019)

Again, the owning of the commercial product branded with the television narrative of *Poldark* helps the consumer feel as though he or she is within the narrative, conflating the

fictional screen narrative with the real history of Cornwall, mines and the late eighteenth century. By drinking *Poldark* ale from an old-fashioned ale bottle, the consumer can imagine the images and narrative from the screen, see themselves in eighteenth-century clothing and live an emotional moment in connection with the screen representation. This solidifies the connection between the viewer, the screen story and the real places where the filming is set.

6.9 The Role of Tourism Agencies: Promoting the Fictional Film Heritage Space

The screen representation of the English Country House, its imagery and narrative, and its role informing the ECH meta-narrative and all its associated concepts, is commercially and culturally valuable. Across the UK and the world, viewers consume the narrative of England and Englishness through film and television – *Harry Potter*, *Downton Abbey* and other well-known television and film productions. The country houses, and the country house narratives, are consumed through the screen and become symbolic of England and prompt visitors to see the locations, and their screen narratives, in real life. Tooke and Baker (1996) describe the role of screen media in influencing the choices tourists make about where to travel, so therefore the screen imagery and narratives are valuable to the tourism agencies for promote visiting heritage to domestic audiences, as well as international ones. The ECH meta-narrative itself has an innate 'Englishness' or 'Britishness' about it wherein the country house symbolises something specific about this country, and the country house heritage dramas disseminate that Englishness. The tourism agencies often utilise images and stories from film and television in promotional campaigns, equating the fictionalised narrative with the experience of being in England, or visiting England's heritage sites.

VisitBritain, the British tourism office, often works directly with film production studios or companies to pick one film that represents Britain, and the two companies work on a project together to promote England/Britain to new audiences and visitors. Two recent examples are *Skyfall* (2012) and *Paddington* (2014); both these films have themes of Britishness in their narrative (the infamous British spy James Bond and the loveable Paddington Bear from Peru who comes to live in England) and have many shooting locations in England. Therefore, the promotion of the film narrative works in tandem with the tourism agencies to sell Britain's cultural heritage to the world. Film audiences relate their own experiences to film and television programmes (Jenkins, 2013; Monk, 2011) and become personally attached to the storyline. When the tourism agencies utilise these narratives to sell real experiences in England, the boundary between the fictional stories on screen and the real-life experiences on a tour or a trip becomes blurred; for the visitor, they have an exciting emotional experience, although it may not portray a 'real' experience of England. When the imagery of the country house from a fictionalised commercial screen production is used by a large organisation like VisitBritain, the heritage managers further lose control over how their country house heritage site is presented to the public, and the expectations of visitors is shaped by the commercial sold tourism experiences. The ECH meta-narrative is so commercial and culturally valuable, it permeates the space between the real country house and the fictional one and, for the visitor, becomes difficult to distinguish.

In interview, it was demonstrated to me how important film tourism is for the soft power, or cultural power, of Britain abroad. At the time of finalising this chapter, three to four years after the interviews were undertaken, the UK was facing a major decision over Brexit, and

focusing on the importance of soft power and creative experiences to attract foreign tourists was greater than ever. Soft power is 'the ability to achieve objectives through attraction and persuasion' (Portland, 2019) and in 2018 Britain was rated number one on the soft power index produced by Portland (https://softpower30.com/country/united-kingdom/). Will Rostron (Interview, 2015), from the GREAT Britain campaign, expressed how important film and television can be for increasing the awareness of British culture and heritage abroad. The GREAT Britain campaign 'showcases the best of what our whole nation has to offer to inspire the world and encourages people to visit, do business, invest and study in the UK' (http://www.greatbritaincampaign.com/#!/about) and creates toolkits for each country based on the international visitor. Emma Wilkinson (Interview, 2015), Senior Partner Marketing Manager at VisitBritain, echoed these statements and quoted internal research concluding that 40% of potential international visitors to the UK would like to visit a place seen on film or television. Research like this is a big incentive for the tourism campaigns that utilise film and television narratives, and imagery, to attract visitors and create campaigns. Country houses are so useful to the promotional work of agencies like VisitBritain and the GREAT Britain campaign because heritage locations can be offered as physical experiences to visitors – viewers can actually visit the places seen in the films.

Wilkinson (Interview, 2015), from VisitBritain, provided two major examples when speaking with me: the OMGB (Home of Amazing Moments) campaign (https://www.visitbritain.org/great-britain-home-amazing-moments-campaign) and the 'Live the Bond Lifestyle' campaign, both of which are in conjunction with the GREAT Britain campaign. An image from the Bond campaign is found below.

Image 6.30 'Live Like Bond' Campaign Material
(http://www.jamesbondlifestyle.com/news/visitbritain-launches-bond-great-campaign)
(Accessed: 4 September 2017)

Bond, a famous fictional character synonymous with Britishness, is well known through both the original *Bond* novels and the many globally successful films. Although the campaign discussed in interview and pictured above was for *Skyfall* (2012), VisitBritain and the GREAT Britain campaign utilised Bond in a second tourism campaign for *Spectre* (2015). A marketing campaign like this promotes the connection between Bond, the UK and experiencing the film and its locations during a visit to Great Britain. As I mentioned earlier, *Spectre* (2015) was filmed in a number of heritage locations in London and the countryside, and specifically at Blenheim Palace. Therefore, the connection between the real country house filming locations, the promotional campaign and Bond's fictional stories becomes stronger. At Blenheim Palace, a key location in *Spectre* (2015), there were a number of

marketing tools created by VisitBritain which helped viewers and visitors learn about the palace as a location, a place to visit and an experience. These included a competition to win 'The Bond Lifestyle' with an advert of a car in the courtyard at Blenheim Palace and a 360-degree view of Blenheim Palace in the Bond section of the GREAT website. Both of these experiences are illustrated here.

Image 6.31 Images from the *Spectre* VisitBritain/GREAT Britain campaign of Blenheim Palace (http://www.jamesbondlifestyle.com/news/visitbritain-launches-bond-great-campaign) (Accessed: 4 September 2017)

VisitBritain identifies upcoming films which could work with the VisitBritain marketing strategy. Classic English stories are the best, and Wilkinson listed examples like Robin Hood, Sherlock Holmes and the abovementioned James Bond, which are fictional characters strongly associated with Britain. She felt utilising film and television narrative is 'the ultimate call to action – watch the film and come study and visit Britain and see the locations for yourself' (Interview with Wilkinson, 2015). Even Wilkinson admitted 'stereotypes sell well', which reflects the use of country houses and imagery from programmes that reiterate English stereotypes such as *Downton Abbey* (2010–15) and *Poldark* (2015–19).

Wilkinson also described how she worked with tour partners and film companies to facilitate film experiences with the National Trust and Basildon House around the release of the *Downton Abbey* Christmas special. She sees film as the hook to draw visitors in to visiting the cultural heritage sites of Britain. Utilising the country house, as seen on film, to market Great Britain and the country house itself to foreign visitors reiterates the fictional narratives and their meanings. Imagery from posters, such as the above 'Bond is Great' poster, and tours or experiences utilising film and television narratives offered to visitors further blurs the lines between the real English country house, and its own history, and the stereotyped, fictional, on-screen country house. The VisitBritain website (https://www.visitbritain.com/gb/en) has numerous articles highlighting the importance of both heritage and film and television to the national tourism agenda. The Film & TV section highlights films shot in Britain and the locations you can visit from these films. Tourism agencies and experiences act quickly on the representations in popular culture, assuming which ones are likely to strike an audience and create an impetus to visit, travel and consume in association with a film.

Outside of the official tourism agencies, there are a number of independent tour operators that create tours based on films and television programmes, such as

- *Midsomer Murders* (http://www.visitmidsomer.com/slide/guided-tours/)
- *James Bond* (https://britmovietours.com/bookings/james-bond-tours/)
- *Downton Abbey* (https://britmovietours.com/bookings/downton-abbey-tour/)
- *Poldark* (http://www.bhctours.co.uk/index.php/uk-tours/poldark-tour)

- *Pride and Prejudice* (https://britmovietours.com/bookings/pride-and-prejudice-tour-of-locations/)

These tours are further illustrative of the commercial power of the screen narratives and the draw of film tourism. These commercial tourism endeavours connect the narratives of the film and television programmes to the real locations at which they were filmed, interweaving the story of the filming locations with the story of the screen production. All of the above-mentioned tours are from productions which utilise the English country house as an important location, representative of England and the associated values of the English Country House and the meta-narrative. These tours also bring new visitors to the country houses included in the itineraries, and these tourists are there as screen tourists, to visit sites through the narrative of the film and television production. Therefore, the locations they visit on the tours are the screen locations, rather than the real location.

The Brit Movie Tours webpage for *Downton Abbey* states:

> *Become Lord or Lady Grantham for the day, as you visit the film locations used for the BAFTA-winning period drama on a Small Group Downton Abbey Tour of Locations. The mini coach tour has a maximum of 15 persons and includes your own guide plus driver making this the best option for any Downton Abbey fan*. (Accessed: 23 April 2019)

The use of the words 'Become Lord or Lady Grantham' invites the participant to view the spaces through the lens of the television programme. This creates an emotional connection between the viewer, the programme and the locations – the ECH meta-narrative, as

delivered through *Downton Abbey*, has such strong value, commercially and culturally, it can be the base for these commercial leisure experiences. The narrative of *Downton Abbey* is the narrative of the English Country House for these tourists.

Of the Brit Movie *Pride and Prejudice* tour, it states:

> *Your tour will start with a short walking tour of Jane Austen sites in Bath followed by refreshments at the Jane Austen Centre. Following this we will visit the village of Meryton which includes the Meryton Assembly rooms, Darcy's university and The Bell at Bromley. Then you'll visit Longbourn church where Lizzie marries Darcy.* ***(For large groups only there is an option to arrange regency dancing (numbers permitting) led by the experts to dances from P&P, in period costume!)*** (Accessed: 23 April 2019)

This paragraph focuses on crossing the boundary from film sets to historical experiences, particularly the highlighted part wherein tour participants will experience 'Regency dancing'; the experience of 'P&P' dances have an element of the film coming to life. As these experiences are not controlled by any country house management, they impact on the ECH meta-narrative outside of the remit of heritage managers, who own and run country houses.

In this way, the official tourism channels of VisitBritain and the GREAT Britain campaign, as well as the unofficial film and television tours, develop the ECH meta-narrative, and within this space of commercialised popular culture and visitor experiences, the management of the real country house sites have no control. The commercial tourism experiences take the

fictional film and television narratives one step further than just the screen experience and begin to make it real to the viewer and visitor.

6.10 Conclusion

After understanding the commercial relationship of the real country house site, the screen production and the English Country House meta-narrative, Chapter 6 explored how the screen representations, narratives and imagery are utilised by heritage managers, commercial organisations and tourism organisations to further create commercial opportunities, as well as to take back some control over the cultural direction of the ECH meta-narrative. Utilising the narratives on-site means the country house management can retake control over some of the values and meanings associated with the popular cultural representations of the country house and their site – but at the same time this blurs the lines between the fictional country house and the real. Due to the prevalence of the ECH meta-narrative, and its commercial and cultural value, it is difficult for heritage managers to escape from visitors expecting an experience in line with the screen narrative.

Viewers form an emotional connection to the country house on screen and bring this expectation to their visit; heritage managers interviews and tourism academic literature suggests they expect an experience in line with the on-screen emotive experience. Products such as the movie maps allow the visitor to engage with the screen stories, visit the locations and bring their own memories, expectations and emotions to the site visit. The popularity of screen tourism showcases how powerful the narratives of the screen can be, and the movie map allows the heritage managers to utilise this power to create better

visitor experiences that engage consumers. For the heritage manager, the hope is to create a return visitor out of the screen visitor by delivering programming and experiences that make the visitor want to return.

Downton Abbey (2010–15) was discussed in a number of the examples of visitor experiences with screen representations and has come to represent the ECH meta-narrative. From interviews discussing 'the *Downton Abbey* effect', meaning the huge growth in the popularity of country houses and the 'upstairs/downstairs' experience, to the use of *Downton Abbey* imagery with the VisitBritain campaigns, it becomes apparent that *Downton Abbey* and its nostalgic, rose-tinted fictional narrative has become what most consumers see as the English Country House story. *Downton Abbey* is more recognisable than its real location, Highclere Castle, or any real country house for that matter, and *Downton Abbey* represents what visitors are interested in purchasing. The ECH meta-narrative is *Downton Abbey*, and vice versa.

The ECH meta-narrative means every country house becomes part of this fictionalised, nostalgic portrayal of the past, so the way for heritage producers to retain some commercial and cultural value from screen representations, and to create some unique selling points about their site, is to reproduce these representations. Presenting the screen narratives on-site means the country house is reaping some benefit of the commercial value of the screen presentations and is increasing visitor numbers and spend through these mediatised experiences. Producing screen-induced experiences also allows the heritage managers to take some control over the trajectory of the popular culture understanding of the country house and redirect some of the film tourism expectations into understanding the real

country house and its own story. Although the heritage managers are compelled to engage with film and television for commercial benefits, and it can sometimes cause problems for the branding and narrative of the individual site, the heritage managers can make use of the country house of popular culture, the EHC meta-narrative, and utilise it for promotion, presentation and the visitor experience.

Between the country house management utilising screen narratives on-site in visitor experiences and interpretation and the experiences of tours and commercial products, the fictional narratives and representations of the English Country House become blurred with the real country house site and experiences. I argue that the production of heritage experiences in conjunction with the film imagery and narrative creates a space at the country house site which is a mix of real and fictional, making an experience that meets the perceived needs of the film tourist as well as the tourism organisations promoting film experiences. This action of designing, producing and presenting film narratives on-site by heritage managers reflects the actions of the commercial sector, and further complicates the relationship between real and fictional. Visitors experience the film narratives at the real country house site itself, which can be interpreted as more 'genuine' or 'authentic' and the site of the accepted heritage discourse (Smith, 2009). When the country house presents itself as a part screen fictional space, it echoes the film narratives and the consumption of film tourism experiences created outside of the country house space. The country house does this to take back control commercially and culturally of the English country house experience, but the ECH meta-narrative is enhanced and further formed through the film and television narratives, so the country house cannot escape from the overwhelming

consumption and acceptance of this archetypal English Country House and the ECH meta-narrative.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: DESIGNING, PRESENTING AND PRODUCING THE SCREEN-INDUCED COUNTRY HOUSE AND THE ENGLISH COUNTRY HOUSE META-NARRATIVE

7.1 Introduction

This thesis set out to explore the effect of screen representations of the English country house on the design, production and presentation of heritage visitor experiences at real country house sites.

The key questions that guided my research were:

- How are English country houses engaged with the production of film and television programmes?
- How is the English country house represented in film and television, and how does this impact the presentation and production of heritage experiences on-site at the country house?
- How do heritage managers respond to participation in film and television and how do they expect audiences to engage with the English country house from film and television?
- What is the commercial and cultural significance of the English country house on screen and what is the impact on the meaning and value of the English country house?

- What role do film tourism and screen-related commercial products play in the relationship between the country house on screen and on-site?

This conclusion chapter will answer these research questions and will review the ECH meta-narrative concept, its development in popular culture and its role in the screen production. The conclusion will then highlight the key points of the commercial and cultural relationship between the country house and its representation on screen and the commercial and cultural value placed on the ECH meta-narrative. Following this, the conclusion chapter will summarise concepts of the power narratives between the country house site and its management, the screen production company, the ECH meta-narrative and the consumer tourists. The tourists play an important role in these narratives as it is their capital that is the key to the commercial success of both the heritage site as a visitor attraction and the film or television programme. The chapter will review the design, production and presentation of the screen narratives and the ECH meta-narrative on-site, in commercial products and through tourism organisations, followed by a section on the implications of this research. The implications explore a confusion between the real and the fictional country house through the use of both factual and fictional narratives in the same place, as well as the consequences of visitor programming moving towards entertainment experiences at the heritage site and what this means for the country house as a space of the 'authorised heritage discourse' (Smith, 2006). In conclusion, it will explore the place of the research in the academic canon and some of the broader implications of the findings in the greater cultural space of the UK.

7.2 The English Country House Meta-Narrative

In the literature review, I outlined the development of the country house myth. Theories of mythmaking in the cultural and tourism context are presented by authors such as Selwyn (1996) and Barthes (2009), and these theories are utilised to understand how the imagery and narrative of the English country house has come to represent ascribed meanings and concepts. The literature looked in depth at the process of creating and developing the country house myth through popular culture, as well as the ascribed concepts and meanings of the country house myth, such as landscape (Matless, 1998), class (Smith, 2006), tradition (de Groot, 2009) and memory (Macdonald 2013). Utilising Smith's (2009) dialogue of the authorised heritage discourse, I demonstrated the complicated position the English country house inhabits within heritage conversation, engaging with both 'high' culture and popular culture.

In their books on the history of the English country house and the English countryside, Kelsall (1993) and Williams (1973) suggest the myth of the English country house has been created through the repetition of content associated to the imagery. The imagery of the ECH is utilised repeatedly in popular culture mediums and associated with specific concepts and meanings. Art, literature, politics and cultural attitudes from different time periods have influenced how the public and the country house owners themselves have understood the meaning of the English country house. As Smith (2009) illustrates, the English country house has an 'authorised' reading – an approved way of being consumed.

Some of the principal concepts associated with the imagery of the English country house in popular culture are outlined below. These were described in depth in Chapter 2 and are taken from the literature available on the English country house. They are as follows:

- preservation of traditions and the traditional way of life
- the maintenance of the social class structure
- the taming of a wild landscape
- a propensity for conservative nostalgia for the 'better days' of times past
- the power and wealth of those who own the land and the cultural patrimony
- the country house as a symbol of Englishness and 'there will always be England'

The imagery of the English country house is so closely aligned with these concepts that the representative image of the English country house is read by the viewer/consumer/visitor as inherently having these concepts associated with it, whether in a film or television programme, or another form of popular culture. The ECH meta-narrative proposes the 'English Country House' (ECH) is a representative convention of popular culture, and the depiction of the English Country House repeated over and over with the same meanings and concepts creates the ECH meta-narrative. The representative English Country House is not the same as an individual country house in England, or the factual history of country houses in England. The ECH meta-narrative refers instead to the greater popular culture narrative of the English country house, which is symbolised in literature, on television, in films and through user-generated content (the work of fans). The repetitious appearance of this narrative solidifies the archetypal meaning of the country house in the minds of the consumer.

To answer the question posed on how country houses are depicted on screen, I explored costume and heritage dramas, which most often utilise the country house as a location. These productions are the purveyors of consumable nostalgia. Nostalgia, the 'conceptual opposite of progress' and a 'defeatist retreat from the present' (Pickering & Keightley, 2006, p. 919), is an essential part of the success of the ECH meta-narrative on screen. Therefore, the ECH is consumed through a lens of nostalgia, a 'rose-tinted' view of the past and the people who inhabit this sentimental world of the country house; the country house location is often the star, or a key character, of these screen productions. On screen, the country house represents the lauded past, the safe haven from the fear of modernity, and these attributes are transferred from the ECH on screen to the real country house locations. Narrated through costume-drama film and television productions, the ECH meta-narrative has rewritten the meaning of the country house from an emblem of wealth, power and land ownership/stewardship to a modern nostalgic and romantic interpretation of the past.

For the film or television production, one on-screen country house in the script may be physically shot at many individual real country house sites – what matters to the producer is that the image represents the ECH meta-narrative and its concepts. In this way, all individual, real country houses become part of this ECH meta-narrative. When nostalgic and screen-related commercial heritage experiences, products and tourism organisations utilise the image of the screen ECH to sell English country house experiences and travel, the nostalgic, fictional concepts become more entrenched and integral to the meaning of the ECH and its consumption. The ECH is used within a screen narrative to signify the values and concepts of the ECH meta-narrative; the screen narrative may then change or enhance the

meanings of the ECH meta-narrative through the content of the screen narrative. This is a cyclical relationship and continues with every new representation of an English Country House on screen. The new mythology of the ECH meta-narrative is regularly amended to reflect the on-going representations and narratives of popular culture.

7.3 The Commercial and Cultural Value of the Country House and its Screen Representation

I posed the question 'how are English country houses engaged with the production of film and television programmes?' and the relationship between the English country house and the commercial film and television sector is, at its heart, based on transactions of value, both commercial and cultural. The reflexive commercial benefit to both house and screen production illustrates why there is a lasting relationship between the two entities. Country houses receive a location fee from the screen production from the use of the site; there is the further possibility of increased audience engagement which may bring greater visitor spend as well as the opportunity to take advantage of the screen narratives in saleable products and experiences. The cultural value for the country house comes from the kudos of appearing in film and television, and the global reach of these screen productions, creating new stories for the country house management teams to utilise across marketing, events and experiences.

Another research question centred on the commercial and cultural significance of the English country house on screen, and the effect of screen representation on the meaning and value of the English country house. The ECH meta-narrative theory goes some way to

answering this question, including how the commercial and cultural significance of the country house myth creates value for the producer, the consumer and the heritage site. For the screen producer, the commercial value of the individual country house site lies in its representativeness of the ECH meta-narrative. The ECH meta-narrative is commercially valuable – viewers want to consume this rose-tinted, nostalgic view of the past in costume dramas, across social media and related consumable products, and the ECH meta-narrative represents this. Costume dramas, and other screen productions featuring the country house, generate millions of pounds in revenue and are broadcast across the world. This is also the cultural value of the ECH meta-narrative, and the country house site, to the producers. The country house, and the representation of the past in the ECH meta-narrative, are very popular; the narratives are symbolic of a way of life that many viewers want to absorb and imagine themselves experiencing. Audiences are able to form emotional attachments to the ECH meta-narrative through its repetition on screen in multiple productions; James (2006) argues this is similar to forming connections through a shared experience. This emotional attachment to the ECH meta-narrative is very valuable to the film and television producers, as this translates into both helping tell the story through imagery, without dialogue, and through the commercial consumption of the audience. As de Groot (2009) argued, in difficult social and political times, consumers are more inclined towards nostalgic popular culture, such as the costume drama. The aptitude for nostalgia-led leisure experiences, like film and television, means the country house heritage site not only has commercial value for the production company as a location, but as a representation of the ECH meta-narrative, which encompasses these nostalgic narratives through its amalgamation with the imagery of the country house.

The cultural, emotional attachment which is so valuable to the screen production companies when utilising the ECH meta-narrative is also valuable to the country house heritage site. This attachment, for fans of the productions, can translate into increased visitor numbers and increased visitor spend. The individual country house is benefitting from the cultural value of the ECH meta-narrative portrayed on screen, and its inherent emotive connection to audiences, as well as the increased publicity opportunities which translate into visitor engagement opportunities. This increased publicity may also lead to more corporate events and wedding bookings, or increased visitor spend on commercial products available in the gift shop. Arguably, a country house also lacks the choice of whether or not to engage with film and television, because not only is the income very welcome in a cash-strapped industry, if one country house does not accept the filming, another will, and the original house will lose out on the commercial possibilities. This situation introduces the power narratives between the country house site, the screen production and representation, and the English Country House meta-narrative which emerged as another key finding from this research.

7.4 The Power Narratives of the Country House, the Screen Production and the ECH Meta-Narrative

In the literature review, I used de Groot's (2009, p. 1) question, 'Who, then, tells the public what "history" is and what it means?', to illustrate the way meaning in history and heritage is dependent on the person telling the story. Although it was not an original research question, the concept of power narratives between the heritage producers of the meaning, story and brand of the individual country house as well as the archetypal ECH of the meta-

narrative was illustrated in the analysis. Owners and heritage managers will present the country house differently from the screen producers, and both present it differently to the multitude of ways it is presented in other popular culture. In relation to the English Country House on screen, and the current mediums of delivery of the ECH meta-narrative, it is the screen production company and its writers, as well as the ECH meta-narrative, that tell the country house story. As the producers create the imagery and narrative on screen, they are influencing the ECH meta-narrative, impacting all real country house sites as well as the individual country house that appeared in film.

Historically the owner of the country house controlled the narrative of the site through the choice of architecture, art, interior decoration, garden and landscape design, and the degree of public awareness of the house and its habitants. These choices were often made to reflect the story the owner of the house wanted to tell outsiders, about wealth, power, taste, class, or any number of personal qualities. That being said, there is an argument that, even from the outset, the country house was presented and represented through mediums of popular culture of each time period (poems, art, satire), which shaped how the public consumed the meaning of the country house.

Today, English country houses, especially those that are open to the public, are managed. Sites are branded, marketed and sold to the consumer and carefully curated to appeal to audiences and visitors. In relation to film and television, the need and desire for funding for the individual country house site, through location fees and the further publicity and marketing, means sites continue to participate in film and television productions. The enthusiasm from audiences for reminiscence narratives in which the country house no

longer signifies financial wealth and economic power, but a 'rose-tinted' view of the past and the people who inhabited this nostalgic world of the country house, continues its popularity. This means screen producers will remain utilising the English country house site, and the ECH meta-narrative, in film and television screen representations, and the ECH of the costume heritage drama will continue to drive the meanings and concepts of the English Country House. Heritage owners and managers of the country house site lose power over their own story – heritage marketing will never reach the audiences of a globally successful film or television programme, such as *Downton Abbey* (2010–15) (Cuccinello, 2016), so the main medium of consumption is the screen media. The screen producers control the narrative of the English Country House.

The film and television representations inform the ECH meta-narrative, as well as profiting from the commercial and cultural value of the ECH meta-narrative. This reciprocal, or cyclical, relationship illustrates the power of popular culture to impact audiences' understanding of heritage. The country house manager is left with little control over their site's story, with producers selling the screen ECH and ECH meta-narrative and its associated concepts around the world. The fictional narratives of the screen blanket all country houses with the meaning of the archetypal ECH.

As the English Country House is valuable because it is widely consumed, the desire for its consumption from the public indicates consumers may ultimately shape the meaning of the ECH meta-narrative, and therefore the ascribed meaning of the English Country House. When audiences consume the country house on screen, they are using their time and financial capital to decide which representations are popular and valuable. The popular

representations are then repeated and represented. Audiences become visitors at the real country house site and may arrive with a pre-conceived idea about the meaning and concept of an English country house. As Monk found, 'prior identities and orientations mediate and constrain respondent's relationships with the films' (Monk, 2012, p. 170) and many heritage managers agreed with Monk's observations, and that these relationships also were expected to impact visitors' expectations on site. The research question posed asked how heritage managers expect audiences to engage with film and television representations of the English Country House. Interviewees all expressed awareness of the effect of film and television representations on their brand and the expectation of their visitors. Each viewer is bringing a set of understandings and expectations to the country house site as a result of consuming the country house on film. The power the audience has over the meaning of the English Country House could be viewed as a democratisation of heritage, a move away from Smith's (2006, 2009) description of the country house as a site of authorised heritage discourse. This democratisation of the traditional 'high' cultural space of the English country house and its art collection allows a broader narrative, including more stories and experiences (Goulding, 2000). Popular culture is the means through which the English Country House meta-narrative is consumed, and this is available everywhere, constantly changing and influencing how the country house is understood. Beeton (2005, p. 4) argues the influence popular media has on 'reinforcing particular images of these destinations … From the mid-twentieth century, film (and later television) became the main mass media outlet and has been particularly effective in affecting tourism'. When tourism organisations, such as VisitBritain, utilise the screen imagery and narrative in global campaigns for Britain, the ECH meta-narrative becomes more entrenched with the visiting public and drives the

ownership of the narrative of each country house further from the hands of the management team.

Yet, the heritage space of the country house and the ECH meta-narrative can only be democratised as far as what is valuable commercially, because in the end the screen producers, and all popular culture consumption, is based around a commercial value. I argue it is the heritage management who have the least control over the representation of their individual site, with the desires of audiences, the commercial and cultural strategy of the screen producers and the sway of the ECH meta-narrative over the concept of the English Country House that influence how each country house is viewed. As Harvey Edgington said, the screen story 'becomes part of the history of the house'. The power over the narrative of an individual country house for the management is lost within the ECH meta-narrative and the fictional screen portrayal.

7.5 Designing, Producing and Presenting the Screen-Mediated Country House On-Site

Although I have argued the heritage managers of country house sites have the least power in controlling the narrative of the English Country House, they can repossess some of the power over their own narrative, both commercially and culturally, by utilising the popularity of the country house on screen, the ECH meta-narrative, and tourists' desire to experience the mediated country house. This section answers two major research questions: how heritage managers respond to the participation of their sites in film and television and how does this representation in film and television productions impact the production and presentation of the heritage visitor experience on site.

To the heritage managers interviewed, appearance in a film or television programme provided an opportunity for the site to create more unique selling points and reach new audiences, and there were very few negative feelings towards appearing in film recorded in the data analysis. I identified a broad understanding from the heritage managers, as evidenced in the interviews, of the expectations of film tourists – the costume drama audiences who make the choice to visit the country house seen on screen. For many of these film tourists, they are influenced both by a specific country house (such as Highclere Castle and *Downton Abbey*) and the greater ECH meta-narrative amalgamated through many costume heritage dramas. This answers the question about how heritage managers expect audience-visitors to engage with their country house on a visit; the analysis showed similar findings to the literature on film tourism.

The country house management reacts according to these perceived needs and expectations of the screen tourists by utilising the screen imagery and narratives to draw in the tourists and create visitor experiences which reflect fictional representations. The strength of the ECH meta-narrative across media allows all country houses to engage with film tourism even if they have not had a 'starring role' in a film or programme; if a country house has a major role in a narrative, it is essential to address the impact on the brand and story of the site. Film and television representations create a familiarity with the location (Croy & Heitmann, 2011) and allow the audiences to connect with history personally (de Groot, 2009). I argue the utilisation of the screen narratives in marketing and visitor experiences and interpretation on-site means that heritage managers are able to gain a commercial and cultural use from the loss of control over the narrative of the English

Country House by being shrewd with regard to the opportunities from screen representation. The ECH meta-narrative means each individual country house is already associated to the archetypal fictional English Country House of popular culture, therefore all country house heritage producers must recapture control over their own story and create engaging heritage visitor experiences through utilising the film representations to help differentiate themselves from each other.

To capitalise on the screen representations and meet the expectations of some film tourists, the management of the country house must utilise marketing initiatives to draw screen tourists to the country house and create screen-related experiences. These screen-related marketing and visitor experiences present a stronger connection between the screen representations of a country house and the visitor experience on-site. Visitors have already consumed a specific representation of the country house they are visiting on screen and will have expectations of that experience. Visitors to Highclere Castle have likely consumed *Downton Abbey* (2010–15) on their televisions, and this has drawn them as tourists. Once the visitor is on site it is the choice of the management to deliver film-related interpretation as appropriate.

The management of the country house utilise publicity and marketing initiatives related to screen stories and imagery to draw screen tourists to the country house; they can then create screen-related experiences to meet the needs of the tourists when they arrive on-site. The brand or story of the individual country house is key to its success and the publicity and marketing of an individual country house exemplifies the values and selling points of the individual country house. The easiest, and least expensive, way of disseminating new

branding values from screen productions is through social media. Social media is also rapid and quick-changing and allows fans to engage with the country house site in an immediate way. Utilising Jenkins' (2013) theories on participatory film culture, the country house management can be part of discussions with the fans and allow them to participate and even trespass into the screen narratives. Social media often takes the form of 'you've seen us on screen, now visit the real place', which allows the country house site to use the film publicity but distance themselves from the screen narratives if necessary and create space for the visitor to have experiences outside the screen narrative. Traditional marketing may take the same form, with brochures, websites and newsletters utilising similar themes; the example of the *Jane Eyre* wedding brochure at Haddon Hall fits the utilisation of film publicity. With this clever use of available marketing resources, country house heritage site management utilises publicity from film and television to engage with the stories on screen and the stories on-site.

Designing and producing interpretation and visitor experiences on-site that align the real country house site with the film narratives helps the heritage managers utilise the commercial and cultural power of the screen representations of the ECH. By utilising the film and television imagery and narratives on-site, the country house managers can take back some control over how visitors consume their heritage site and introduce them to new stories; weaving together a filmic country house experience with a historical one. It also means the heritage producers receive the benefits from engaging with filming and new audiences. The film tourist may leave with further knowledge about the real historic site or country houses more generally; this will not supplant the recognised ECH screen narrative in

the visitor's memory but create a more nuanced understanding of the English country house.

Screen-related exhibitions, interpretation and visitor experiences maximise the connection between the screen representations and the real country house location; even if they do not incorporate the story from the fictional screen representation, the utilisation of the screen imagery is a commercially prudent decision. For heritage managers of individual sites, the hope is these exhibitions meet the expectations of film tourists and bring in new audiences. There are a number of ways the country house heritage site utilises film narratives in the visitor experience and interpretation which give film tourists different ways of engaging with the English country house. Some examples discussed in the analysis include *Mr. Turner* (2014) and Petworth House, with a bespoke exhibition in association with the filmmakers, and the increase of screen-related exhibitions at Lacock Abbey over the period of my fieldwork. These exhibitions are two different types of screen-related exhibitions: one is about the experience of having a film crew on-site (the film case at Lacock Abbey) and the others are utilising screen narratives and imagery to engage visitors who have watched the programmes (*Mr. Turner* at Petworth House and *The Hollow Crown* (2012–16) at Lacock Abbey). Guided and self-guided walks incorporate film and television narratives into tours, and visitors may engage in their own movie walks produced by user-generated content. Commercial products based on screen narratives may become part of the interpretation space, such as the bottle of *Downton Abbey* wine in Basildon House. Exhibitions and experiences allow the individual country house sites to utilise the valuable film and television narratives for their commercial and cultural advantage. In doing so, these

fictional screen narratives become part of the cultural narrative of the individual country house and are further implicated in the meaning of the ECH meta-narrative, of which every country house is a part.

National organisations, such as the National Trust and the Historic Houses Association, also utilise the film and television narratives to increase visitor numbers and visitor spend. Movie maps are a popular way to get visitors to travel around the country visiting sites. The *Wolf Hall* (2015) movie map, referenced in Chapter 6, ask visitors to travel around the Southwest of England visiting different locations from the film. The locations used in *Wolf Hall* are also actual historic properties, some with real connections to the Tudor period, and this means the real history of the country houses on the tour and the semi-fictional portrayal on screen existed in a state between the real and the fictional. For the visitor, the real country houses become linked to the fictional ones, and their respective narratives may knit together into one semi-fictional, semi-factual storyline.

To answer the final question posed in the research framework, commercial products, experiences and events also capitalise on the popularity of the screen-narratives, and the attractiveness of the ECH meta-narrative to sell products. *Downton Abbey* (2010–15) is the inspiration for a number of books with titles including such words as 'the real Downton Abbey', as well as bathroom fixtures and personal hygiene products. These are available for consumption by viewers of the programme who want to place themselves into the *Downton Abbey*/country house/ECH meta-narrative after they have consumed it on screen, or possibly on-site. The line between the real Highclere Castle, with its aristocratic owners, and Downton Abbey, with its fictional aristocratic owners and genial staff, becomes blurry. 'The

Music from Bond – Live at Blenheim Palace' (2017) illustrates how country houses can utilise film associations to sell events outside of the traditional heritage visitor experience, creating income for the country house, while some locations take the fictional a step further and create an experience where the participant is living within the fictional ECH meta-narrative, like Dundas Castle and its 'Upstairs/Downstairs' *Downton Abbey* experience (Smith & McLelland, 9 March 2016).

Also in answer to the final research question, tourism organisation VisitBritain promotes the country with images from film and television, such as the James Bond *Spectre* campaign. Independent tour operators help visitors trespass into the narrative of the screen production, fulfilling the expectations from the screen and helping audiences become part of the ECH meta-narrative. The Brit Movie Tours *Downton Abbey* tour encourages visitors to 'Become Lord or Lady Grantham for the day', and their *Pride and Prejudice* tour has attendees experience regency dancing in period costume. These activities bring the screen narratives to life in the real places where the fictional narrative was filmed. This blurred boundary means audiences/visitors begin to equate the real sites with the fictional narratives, and the film narratives continue their impact on the ECH meta-narrative. If a country house has a film and television tour visiting, it is economically prudent for the house management to meet the expectations of the screen tour and create film-related experiences.

Film and television exhibitions and experiences are popular and lucrative, so the country house management will continue to produce them; commercial enterprises will also continue to create experiences based around screen narratives. It is the public's own

appetite for nostalgia, and the English Country House in the costume heritage drama, driving the country house sites to engage with the commercial and cultural values of the screen narratives. By utilising the narratives of the fictional film and television productions on-site, the country houses are legitimising these fictional narratives. As Smith (2006, 2009) suggests, the country house is a site of 'authorised heritage'; once the site of authorised heritage utilises fictional, popular culture narratives in the design, production and presentation of their own meaning for the visitor interpretative experience, I would suggest the fictional narratives become legitimised. This situation illustrates the impact the fictional film and television narratives have on the ECH meta-narrative – both the screen production and its reproduction in visitor experiences on-site contribute to the construction of the ECH meta-narrative in reflection of popular culture. This amalgamation of the real historical English country house and its fictional depiction on screen creates a state of confusion for the audience, wherein the audience expects the ECH meta-narrative on screen rather than the historically accurate country house sites and their individual stories.

The ECH meta-narrative remains a connecting thread through all the real country houses, and all the country houses on screen. It is this meta-narrative that is commercially and cultural valuable; it is the ECH meta-narrative that visitors want and expect on-site. When the country house meets the expectations the popular culture-based ECH meta-narrative has given audiences, the country house earns a commercial impact and a viable place within the competitive leisure market. In the end, it is the audience/visitor who decides which heritage experiences to consume, and the producers of heritage experiences at the country house site design their film and television experiences to meet this perceived need.

7.6 Implications: The Design, Production and Presentation of the Screen-Induced English Country House and the English Country House Meta-Narrative

Thus far I have discussed the relationship between the English country house heritage site, the English country house screen representation and the English Country House meta-narrative. The ECH meta-narrative is the popular culture phenomenon that impacts all country houses and makes them interchangeable for the screen producer. This section reflects on the implications of the findings of this thesis – how the ECH meta-narrative and popular culture screen representations affect the meaning of the English country house on-site and on screen, and where the two engage and cross over in relation to the visitor experience on-site. I address how the blurring of the border between the real historic house and the screen-induced English Country House affects the production of heritage experiences, the meaning of the country house and how the ECH meta-narrative is bigger than either the country house of screen productions or the real country house site. The ECH meta-narrative is so valuable, commercially and culturally, it is used frequently in the production of commercial film and television productions, especially heritage costume dramas. The interchangeability of individual country houses on screen illustrates the strength of the ECH meta-narrative in convincing viewers they are consuming the English Country House, and all the concepts it represents. The ECH meta-narrative becomes stronger and more entrenched as it is repeatedly projected on screen.

7.6.1 The Fine Line Between the Real Country House and the Fictional English Country House

The country house management participates in filming projects for the commercial and cultural benefits, and further utilises the fictional screen narratives on-site to enhance the profits of screen representation by translating awareness into visitor spend as well as meeting the perceived expectations of film tourists. The amalgamation of the real historic house site and the fictional imagery and narratives, of either a specific film or the filmic ECH meta-narrative, helps heritage managers control the outcome of the commercial and cultural screen branding and create a meshed story between the real and the fictional for their individual country house site. This space can be understood through Baudrillard's (1979) concept of 'hyper-real', wherein media representations of the country house have created the ECH meta-narrative, and this ECH is the reality for the consumer public. When the ECH meta-narrative of the screen is produced on the real country house site, the country house visitor experience and interpretation align the fictional country house and the real country house and create a 'more real than real' ECH experience. The actions by heritage producers, commercial producers and tourism producers utilising the fictional screen representations of the country house mean the screen-induced ECH meta-narrative is omnipresent. Viewers and visitors are consuming the fictional ECH meta-narrative so often and so rapidly that, in the mind of the consumer, the English Country House *is* the ECH meta-narrative; Highclere Castle *is* Downton Abbey and Castle Howard *is* Brideshead. When the heritage managers utilise screen imagery (photographs, video, costumes), screen narratives (in tours, through interpretation) or screen-themed commercial products (*Downton Abbey* wine, *Bond* theme event), the fictional narratives become one with the real country house site, drawing the two parallel storylines – the real and the fictional – closer together. Following a movie map, taking photographs of film scenes or going on a *Pride and*

Prejudice tour places the visitors within the fictional narrative, but on the real site. The implication of this is the real and the fictional no longer have a border between them but overlap into one media fiction of the English Country House for each individual country house site, and country houses as a whole. This is the space occupied by the ECH meta-narrative. As the country house is a site of 'authorised' heritage engagement (Smith, 2009), the fictional narratives enmeshed with the real narratives also gain this 'authorised' reading and give further legitimacy to the ECH meta-narrative as a realistic representation of the English country house.

Viewers consume the English Country House and the period costume drama for its nostalgic, comforting aura; then the depictions are reproduced on-site by the country house interpretation to be re-consumed by the visitor. The viewer has become the tourist, and tourists are emotionally and mentally connected to the locations, characters and stories they consume on the television or in the cinema (Monk 2012). Tourists consume the same fictional narratives twice, which is important because the locations on screen and their counterpart real locations become one in the mind of the consumer. Viewer-tourists want to integrate their experiences of watching the film into a visit to the real location (Jenkins, 2013) and in the data I noted a strong drive among the heritage manager interviewees to avoid disappointment for screen tourists with an experience on-site, which is reflected by Connell & Meyer (2009). Although visitor reactions were not the subject of this study, Monk (2011, 2012, 2013) illustrated how strongly engaged audiences of heritage dramas are with the storyline, the characters and the locations, meaning a failure of expectation to meet reality could be devastating to the visitors' emotional engagement, and translate into bad

reactions or reviews of the heritage site. The emotional engagement of the viewer-visitor adds to the blurring of understanding between the real and the fictional country house; it is possible the viewer-visitor *wants* the real location to be the fictional location in the mind. This should be the topic of further research. The lack of distinction between the real country house and its history, and the fictional, popular culture-created, screen-induced ECH meta-narrative and its representations create a difficult-to-navigate space for the producer of heritage experiences at the historic house heritage site.

Heritage is a carrier, and legitimiser, of cultural identity. The ECH meta-narrative occupies in the minds of the consumer, viewer and visitor the real country house space, and because heritage is the authorised space of cultural identity, these screen narratives become linked to the legitimised cultural identity of England and Britain. When the country house site, the place of the 'authorised heritage discourse' (Smith, 2006, 2009), mediates the manufacturing of a myth and fictional narratives are utilised at the real historic site, there is no longer a distinction between the real and the fictional.

7.6.2 The English Country House as Heritage

This utilisation of popular culture to develop the meaning of the English country house heritage site can be seen as democratising or it can be seen as problematic. Experiences of heritage engagement occupy a space between entertainment and education that is ever-evolving and constantly being redefined. As part of the leisure industry, the country house site and its experiences have to stand out to attract visitors, and visitors are looking for entertainment, education and relaxation from a country house experience. Having

consumed the country house on screen, internalising the ECH meta-narrative and its meanings as representative of the country house, the visitor will bring these expectations to the real heritage site. The heritage producers must design, produce and present an experience on-site that meets both the needs of the viewer of the heritage drama who wants to experience the ECH meta-narrative, and the viewer that does not. Interweaving historical narratives and new perspectives on the country house with film and television representations is a way to meet both these needs, but the result is a blurring of the lines between the real and the fictional country house.

Some would argue against the 'Disney-fication' of the heritage experience. The process of making the country house a place of entertainment could arguably remove the historical content and education element of the heritage experience at the country house. This can be problematic because the country house is where 'authorised' discourses of history are presented to the public (Smith 2009). Recently, many historic houses have looked to reveal new stories and 'hidden histories' of their sites, problematising the patriarchal, white, nostalgic authorised narrative of the country house; questioning the traditional narrative also questions many of the concepts of associated with the ECH meta-narrative, which derive from the nostalgic, traditional reading of the English country house. The challenge for heritage producers is the ECH meta-narrative is so strongly entrenched; changing how viewers expect to consume the country house experience will take a change in popular culture narratives of the country house to mirror new interpretation and experiences on-site. If new narratives are found on screen, these can be utilised on-site and assist the heritage producers in changing the narrative of the individual country house. The narrative

of the archetypal English Country House cannot change without a change to the ECH meta-narrative of popular culture.

7.6.3 The ECH Meta-Narrative is *the English Country House*

The amalgamation of the screen narratives and imagery with the interpretation narrative and visitor experience at the real country house site means the narrative inhabits one space. The ECH meta-narrative *is* the country house, wherein there is an inability to distinguish the simulation from the real country house. This ECH meta-narrative inhabits the media on our television screens and in the cinema, and space in the minds of the audiences, the consumer and the visitor. The visitor pays to experience the ECH meta-narrative on screen or in real life; they purchase the meta-narrative in clothing, homeware and books. The ECH meta-narrative is the expectation for the audience-visitor and it is the presentation of the heritage experience on-site. The film and television narratives, because they are popularly consumed and reproduced and presented on-site, augment and develop the ECH meta-narrative, until the on-screen narrative and ECH meta-narrative reflect each other. The ECH meta-narrative drives the country house representation on film; it drives the utilisation of film and television narratives on the country house heritage site; and it drives the expectations of visitors to the country house, which the country house must meet with its design of heritage experiences. At the same time, the film and television narratives augment and update the ECH meta-narrative, solidifying its place within popular culture and driving the meaning of the English Country House. The border between the real country house and the fictional ECH meta-narrative have become too blurred to produce a clear distinction.

7.7 In Conclusion

The country house on screen is the embodiment of the English Country House meta-narrative, as this narrative is so commercially and culturally valuable; the on-screen portrayal informs the ECH meta-narrative as film and television are the mediums of popular culture that most commonly illustrate the English Country House. All English country houses are part of this ECH meta-narrative. Managers of country house heritage sites utilise film and television narratives because they are commercially and culturally valuable, attracting new visitors and increasing visitor spend. Utilising the film and television narratives also meets the emotional and experiential expectations of the film and television tourists. However, with this implementation of film and television narratives on-site, the country house heritage managers engage the mixed factual and fictional narrative of the site and are part of amalgamation of the real and the fictional country house.

Throughout this paper, I have utilised the academic literature on film tourism and film tourists' expectations in relation to the power dynamics within the screen production and country house relationship. When creating on-site experiences, the heritage manager is reacting to their perceived or observed expectations of tourists who come to visit the film and television locations; the heritage managers want to meet these expectations by producing film- and television-based heritage experiences. Thus, while there exists a power imbalance between the country house management and the screen producers, it is ultimately the visitors, rather than the film production companies or the heritage managers, who are influencing the narratives of the English Country House. Both the heritage managers and the screen producers want to please the consumer, who expects to see the

ECH meta-narrative. When the country house manager utilises the film and television narrative, which represents the concepts of the ECH meta-narrative, in producing the heritage experience, the end result is a space which is neither the real historical country house nor the fully fictional screen narrative, but an interwoven narrative that is the history of the real country house and the country house in popular culture. This is embodied in the ECH meta-narrative and is what most of the public understand the country house to mean.

The effect of this on-going relationship is the struggle for the country house managers to create independent brands and narratives for their sites. Additionally, critics would argue the real history is lost in the equation of the English country house with the screen-induced ECH meta-narrative. With the values and meanings of the screen representations disseminated across the globe by both the screen productions and the national tourism operators, the screen-induced ECH meta-narrative will continue to be the emblem of the English Country House archetypical concept and draw visitors to the real country house site. Therefore, the English Country House meta-narrative and the English country houses themselves self are carriers of that 'authorised' English cultural identity.

7.7.1 Contribution to Knowledge

Critics and commentators have discussed the country house and its place within popular culture as well as its role in the commercialisation of heritage, which is deliberated in depth in the literature chapter (see Lowenthal, 1985; Wright, 1985; Hewison, 1987; Samuel, 1994; Sargent, 2000; de Groot, 2009). There is also an extensive segment of research on heritage management (Moscardo & Ballantyne, 2008; Voase, 2008; Ashworth, 2009; Hughes &

Carlsen, 2010); mythmaking (Saussure, 1983; Baudrillard, 1994; Selwyn, 1996; Barthes, 2009); the history of the country house (Kelsall, 1993; Mandler, 1997; Tinniswood, 1998); film tourism and managing heritage sites that benefit from film and television tourism (Beeton, 2005; Croy, 2010; Sheridan, 2013; Bakiewicz, 2015). There are a number of reports dealing with the value and evaluation of the impact of film tourism and the value of the creative industries to the economy/culture output of the nation (Olsberg SPI, 2007; Oxford/BFI, 2012; Olsberg SPI, 2015c; BFC, 2015; BFI, 2019; Shimko, 2019). I brought together this research to inform my fieldwork, analysis and discussion of how the relationship between the English country house management, the film producers and the fictional representations of the ECH meta-narrative operates, as well as how fictional screen images and narratives are reproduced and presented for consumption. I explored how this relationship effects the design, production and presentation of the English country house visitor experience and the meaning of the English Country House and its narrative.

This thesis builds on and was inspired by Sheridan's (2013a, 2013b) work on how the creative industries, specifically film and television, can fund the ever-impoverished heritage industry. She explored the financial and economic relationships between the creative industries and heritage sites; I wanted to understand how this commercial relationship related to the meaning of the English country house on screen, how these popular culture representations create a mythology – the ECH meta-narrative – and how heritage producers, both at the country house site and in commercial business, utilise fictional screen narratives in visitor/consumer experiences. The crux of the analysis and discussions revolved around heritage producers designing and presenting screen-inspired experiences

where the visitor can 'step into' the fictional narrative and what this illustrates about power narratives, fact and fictional interpretation design, the ECH meta-narrative, and what this implies for the meaning of the country house as an 'authorised' site of heritage and a representation of England.

The English Country House meta-narrative theory proposed in this thesis came out of the inductive research and reasoning, through literature, interviews with heritage managers and observational and materials analysis. The ECH meta-narrative serves as a stand-alone theory as well as the framework for analysis of the main questions put forth in this thesis. This thesis contributes an understanding of the relationship between screen producers, heritage producers and the ECH meta-narrative and the power dynamics between the parties. It also illustrates how heritage managers view and assess their own relationship to screen representations and their utilisation and presentation of these screen narratives at their own site. This research showcases the commercial heritage screen products and experiences which utilise the fictional imagery and narratives of the English Country House on screen to make money and sell products and experiences of 'England' or 'Britain' to domestic or international audiences. My contribution to knowledge involves the ECH meta-narrative utilised as a framework to understand how these actions of screen producers, heritage producers, event organisers and tourism professionals affect the meaning of the ECH by blurring the line between the real English country house and its popular culture counterpart, the ECH meta-narrative. The ECH meta-narrative encompasses both the real country house and its representation in popular culture; all country houses are imbued with the meanings of the ECH meta-narrative from film and television, and the use of screen

narratives on-site continues to generate and develop the narrative. I am presenting a small difference in the way of understanding the relationship between the country house and its representation in popular culture, specifically film and television, and adding to the scholarship already available on country houses, their place in popular culture, heritage management, screen representations and film tourism.

7.7.2 Further Research: The Country House Screen Audience-Visitors

I believe the next stage of research within this topic would be to explore the entire phenomenon of the ECH meta-narrative and its representation on screen from the point of view of the audience-visitor. Through the use of literature on film tourism, and the observations of the heritage managers interviewed, I have argued that the film and television narrative is valuable to the country house management because the tourists expect these narratives. When the country house management utilises film narratives in the heritage visitor experience, it is an indication the audience-visitor is holding the power over the narrative of the country house. The expectations of the audience-visitors drive the choices made in presenting and producing heritage experiences. Within this relationship, it would be beneficial to understand how the audience-visitors actually view the country house on screen, their awareness of the ECH meta-narrative and their attitudes and expectations of their visits to the country house. It would add to this research to understand if the decisions made by heritage producers at the country house site were based on the real attitudes and expectations of their visitors, and if they had judged correctly in decisions made about design and presentation. It would also round out the research to understand

how much the public is aware and engaged with building the ECH meta-narrative and perpetuating it through their consumption of nostalgic heritage experiences and products.

I would also suggest exploring this phenomenon with other types of heritage assets, and heritage assets in other countries such as with historic castles or historic cottages. To use an example of another geographical location with a different culture and history, Scotland would be an interesting study. Scotland would provide a variant backdrop to this study where the potential 'Scottish Country House meta-narrative' would be a contrast to the English Country House meta-narrative. Furthermore, there are a number of standing stones, a different heritage asset to the country house, and recently these have featured as a main setting and 'character' in the popular television programme *Outlander* (2014–present). In casual discussion with individuals working in the tourism sector, I have noted there is an expectation the visitor will now be choosing to view these standing stones because of the film representations. Similar to the English Country House meta-narrative, there exists popular culture myths about standing stones, and this myth has commercial and cultural value to both the heritage producers of Scotland and screen producers; the stones make an appealing asset to a production company. Parallel to the English country house, with the popularity of *Outlander*, there are tourism companies which promote *Outlander* tours and experiences, and there are *Outlander*-themed commercial products available. It would be an excellent case study to utilise the theories of this thesis in a new context.

7.7.3 The Impact

As the literature review illustrated, there has been a lot of work done on commercial heritage management, management of the English country house, the history of the English country house and the relationship of film tourism to heritage experiences. This thesis seeks to bring together all of the theories from this literature: the history of the country house, the analysis of the meaning of the English Country House, reception and audience theory, film tourism literature and heritage management literature, to unpack the relationship between the English country house site, its representation on film and television and the screen-induced production and presentation of the country house visitor experience. This work has fleshed out this relationship through interviews with heritage managers and analysis of material culture produced by the country house management, commercial producers and the tourism industry. I believe this thesis answers the questions posed at the start of my research and scrutinises the role of the ECH meta-narrative which is produced from popular culture representations; the impact of its utilisation in screen narratives on the real English country house site, and how the actions and reactions of heritage producers present the English country house as a semi-fictional and semi-factual place for visitors to experience.

7.4.4 Broad Implications

More broadly, this work impacts on conversations around national identity and national politics. Well timed to the completion of this thesis is the Brexit debate, which encompasses a discussion of the soft power (a measurement of cultural success globally) of the United Kingdom abroad and the role soft power will play in a post-Brexit future. It is nostalgic national myths, like the ECH meta-narrative, that are being used to both validate the

strength of the UK and the ability of the UK to be independent on the world stage. There is a fear of the unknown, and of globalisation, at play in this context, and the ECH meta-narrative is comforting in the face of a 'disastrous' modernity (Kelsall, 1993, p. 107). Cultural power, ability and the creative and cultural industries will help the UK continue to create world-respected output on the global stage in the event of Brexit. Heritage is a carrier, and I would argue legitimiser, of cultural identity and cultural ideals of a nation. The ECH meta-narrative gives people in England a sense of identity and continuation from the past in a period of uncertainty. It is within this space that the ECH meta-narrative has become more entrenched with its nostalgic, traditional view of England. This is a problematic basis on which to build a cultural identity, but to break this 'authorised heritage discourse' (Smith, 2009) of the country house, a number of factors will have to change in the representation of the English country house across visitor experience, interpretation and popular culture.

Popular culture is key in the creation of national myths, and this thesis has illustrated how the ECH meta-narrative is created and how it is regularly changed and augmented by the different elements of popular culture. The process of creating the ECH meta-narrative is relevant to any narrative myth that is valuable enough to be replicated on screen and reproduced in a tourism or leisure experience. The story of the ECH meta-narrative is just one of many across the heritage sector, as evidenced by the potential to utilise these theories in Scotland or with other heritage assets. The current year, 2019, has witnessed the use of many historical, nostalgic narratives to give justification for questionable and foolhardy choices by politicians and government bodies. The English Country House often represents the nostalgic, 'retro-chic' approach to the world, where the past is viewed

through rose-tinted glasses, and this nostalgic viewpoint is very popular, reassuring and useful. It draws in the international tourists and it is a comfortable space to view and understand the country house domestically. But the traditional narratives of the country house, encapsulated by the concepts associated with the ECH meta-narrative, are being challenged through new research and interpretation, and it can be hoped film and television will begin to reflect these new stories as they emerge and are told. This will, in turn, challenge the current ECH meta-narrative, and is likely alter it to include more cultural diversity and new narrative elements. As the ECH meta-narrative is ever-changing, this is to be expected. The question remaining to be asked is, in the face of a changing political climate and heritage sector, where does the English Country House meta-narrative and the management of the country house site go next?

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Lucy Abraham, Assistant Visitor Experience Manager at Ham House, 1 October 2015.

Matti Allam, Euroscreen Project and Communications Coordinator at FilmLondon, 6 May 2015.

Stephen Badham, Senior Production Liaison Manager at CreativeEngland, 7 May 2015.

Charles Berkeley, owner of Berkeley Castle, 20 May 2015.

Tony Berry, Visitor Experience Director at the National Trust, 23 April 2015.

Roland Brown, Estate Manager at Berkeley Castle, 20 May 2015.

Jamie Campbell, Conservator at Heritage4Media, 26 January 2016.

Stephanie Cliffe, Marketing and PR Manager at Chatsworth House Trust, 1 May 2015 (telephone interview).

Neil Cole, General Manager of Osterley House and Park, 15 June 2015.

Harvey Edgington, Head of Filming and Locations at the National Trust, 17 November 2015.

Leslie Feore, House Manager at Syon House, 14 January 2016.

Robert Floyd, owner of Great Chalfield Manor and Garden, 19 August 2015.

Leon Forde, Researcher at Olsberg SPI, 18 January 2016.

Simon Foster, Director of Savills Commercial Heritage, 27 January 2016.

Philip Gompertz, House Manager at Burghley House, 16 June 2015.

Emma Hadleigh-Sparks, Senior Administration Assistant at Syon House, 14 January 2016.

David Hingley, Head of Operations at Hampton Court Palace, 14 April 2015.

Lucy Hutchings, Head of Projects (Interim Manager of Filming) at English Heritage, 25 August 2015.

Jurzy Kierkuc-Bielinski, Curator at Kenwood House, 17 April 2015.

David Littlewood, General Manager at Eastnor Castle, 29 October 2015.

Andrew Loukes, House and Collections Manager at Petworth House, 22 September 2015.

Henry Lytton-Cobbold, owner of Knebworth House (written questionnaire).

Anna McEvoy, House Custodian at Stowe House Preservation Trust, 18 November 2015.

Will Rostron, Strategic Partnerships with the GREAT Britain Campaign, 4 December 2016.

Nancy Sheridan, owner of Heritage4Media, 26 January 2016.

Vikki Stronge, Project and Visitor Services Manager at Haddon Hall, 16 February 2016 (phone interview).

Ella Sullivan, Filming Officer at Historic Royal Palaces, 13 May 2015.

Rosalind Teesdale-Ives, owner of Whitminster House, 24 September 2015.

Nick Way, former Director of Historic Houses Association and Consultant, 9 March 2016.

Emma Wilkinson, Senior Partner Marketing Manager at VisitBritain, 15 January 2016.

APPENDIX 2: ORIGINAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

These were the original interview questions as written for the Ethical Review from the University.

Before each interview, after I have been in contact with the individual, he/she has read the brief and information sheet, consented to an interview, signed the consent form and outlined their status on anonymity/confidentiality. I will delve into research on the individual and the house/organisation with which they are connected to tailor the interview questions as appropriately as possible.

This will cover:

- *His/her experiences with country houses in general*
- *His/her experiences with the country house on camera*
- *What type of films he/she has been involved with*
- *Other notes on his/her professional experience*

Introduction: Thank you for being willing to take part in an interview in this project. Can I please reiterate that this interview will be [anonymous/not-anonymous] and [confidential/not-confidential].

Also I would like to ask you for permission to audio record this interview. The main reason behind this recording is to have the set of accurate data – your responses and opinions. This will it will facilitate the analysis of the data we have to conduct during the course of the project.

Do you have any further questions before we start the interview?

1. Questions for Members/Employees/Representatives of National Organisations

Filming

a. In what ways has _____ been involved with the filming of movies or television programmes at country house sites?
b. How did the organisation become involved in this activity? Who initiated the involvement?
c. To what extent is there a financial benefit for the organisation, or the sites you represent, to being involved with filming? (Direct/Indirect)
d. What are some of the other benefits (outside financial) that arise from being involved with the production of film or television programmes at country houses? Are there negative consequences? Do you have any examples?
e. To what extent do you have control over the type of films that are produced at the sites you represent?
f. To what extent do you think the type of film produced influences the pre-visit expectations for visitors?
g. To what extent do you think are country houses portrayed accurately and realistically on screen in the context of the past? In the context of the present?

Visitor Experience

h. To what extent does being involved with a film/programme impact visitor numbers to your heritage sites?

i. To what extent do you think being involved with a film/programme impacts the visitor experience? (How does it impact the visitor experience?)

j. To what extent does being involved with a film/programme impact the signage and informational guides available to visitors at your heritage sites?

k. To what extent do you/managers/employees focus exhibitions on the house's appearances in film or television?

l. To what extent do you think people visit your sites due to their appearance in film(s)? (For example…)

m. How do you think tourist expectations of a visit to your sites change after appearance in a well-known film? (For example…)

n. What types of tours are interested in your sites? To what extent are they film related? How do your country houses work with tour operators to allow film-related tours? To what extent are these tours problematic?

o. What extent do you promote your sites to film producers and companies?

Marketing/Branding

p. To what extent does being involved with a film/programme impact the production of marketing materials for your sites and your organisation?

q. To what extent do you vet production companies and their perspective stories for impact on your brand? What are some examples?

r. In my thesis, I argue there is a 'country house myth' or 'narrative' that encompasses certain attributes associated with the English country house, developed through novels, adaptations, films and television programmes. To what extent do you think this 'narrative' plays in your branding/marketing strategies?

Cultural Impacts

s. It appears that viewers/visitors make connections between heritage/period films/TV programmes and the country houses of England, wherein the lines between history and narrative/fiction become blurred and difficult to differentiate. What is your view on this?

t. Some critics posit the English country house presents a traditional, and possibly conservative/sanitised representation of English history. What is your view on this?

u. Some researchers think that many visitors to the country house feel the act of visiting reaffirms their identity, especially a middle-class identity, or possibly an English identity. What is your view on this association?

v. To what extent do you feel the country house and its associated myths and history represent a English identity?

2. Questions for Employees/Volunteers/Representatives of Country House Heritage Sites

Filming

a. In what ways has _____ been involved with the filming of movies or television programmes?

b. How did the house become involved in this activity? Who initiated the involvement?
c. To what extent is there a financial benefit to being involved with filming? (Direct/Indirect)
d. What are some of the other benefits from being involved with a film or television programme? Are there negative consequences? Examples?
e. To what extent do you have control over the type of films that are produced here?
f. To what extent do you think the type of film influences the pre-visit expectations of visitors?
g. To what extent are country houses portrayed accurately and realistically on film in the context of the 'past'? What about the present?

Visitor Experience

h. To what extent does being involved with a film/programme impact visitor numbers?
i. To what extent do you think being involved with a film/programme impacts the visitor experience? (How does it impact the visitor experience?)
j. To what extent does being involved with a film/programme impact the signage and informational guides available to visitors? The official tours?
k. To what extent do you/managers/employees focus exhibitions on the house's appearances in film or television?
l. To what extent do you think people visit _____ due to its appearance in _____ film(s)?

m. How do you think tourist expectations of a visit to _____ change after appearance in a well-known film?

n. What types of tours are interested in _____? To what extent are these tours film related? How do you work with tour operators to allow film-related tours? To what extent are these tours problematic?

Marketing/Branding

o. To what extent does being involved with a film/programme impact the production of marketing materials for _____?

p. To what extent do you vet production companies and their perspective stories for impact on your brand? What are some examples?

q. In my thesis, I argue there is a 'country house myth' or 'narrative' that encompasses certain attributes associated with the English country house, developed through novels, adaptations, films and television programmes. To what extent do you think this 'narrative' plays in your branding/marketing strategies?

Cultural Impacts

r. It appears that viewers/visitors make connections between heritage/period films/TV programmes and the country houses of England, wherein the lines between history and the narrative/fiction are blurred and difficult to differentiate. What is your view on this?

s. Some critics posit the English country house presents a traditional, and possibly conservative/sanitised representation of English history. What is your view on this?

t. Some researchers think that many visitors to the country house feel the act of visiting reaffirms their identity, especially a middle-class identity, or possibly an English identity. What is your view on this association?

u. To what extent do you feel the country house and its associated myths and history represent an English identity?

3. Questions for Employees/Representatives of Film-Related Companies/Organisations

Filming

a. In what ways has _____ been involved with the filming of movies or television programmes at country house heritage sites?

b. How did _____ become involved in this activity? How was this involvement initiated?

c. To what extent do you think there is a financial benefit for a country house to host a film or television production? (Direct/Indirect)

d. What are some of the other benefits for the country house in involvement with a film or television programme? What are some of the negative consequences?

e. To what extent do you vet potential country house sites for film and television production?

f. To what extent do you think the type of film produced influences the expectations of visitors to the country house? (For example, heritage/period vs modern)

g. To what extent do you think are country houses portrayed accurately and realistically on film? To what extent do film production companies attempt accuracy?
h. How are locations chosen for use in film and television programmes? Why?
i. How do films usually utilise the country house? Is the potential impact on visitors taken into account?

Visitor Experience

j. To what extent do you think being involved with a film/programme impacts visitor numbers?
k. To what extent do you think being involved with a film/programme impacts the visitor experience? (How does it impact the visitor experience?)
l. To what extent do you think people visit country house heritage sites due to its appearance in films or television programmes?

Marketing/Branding

m. To what extent does the film production company work with the country house management in terms of marketing or branding the film or country house?
n. In my thesis, I argue there is a 'country house myth' or 'narrative' that encompasses certain attributes associated with the English country house, developed through novels, adaptations, films and television programmes. To what extent do you think this 'narrative' plays in your branding/marketing strategies?

o. To what extent do filmmakers, writers and producers rely on 'tropes' of the country house to have greater impact on their productions?

Cultural Impacts

p. Some viewers/visitors make connections between heritage/period films/TV programmes and the country houses of England, wherein the lines between history and narrative/fiction are blurred and difficult to differentiate. What is your view on this?

q. Some critics posit the English country house presents a traditional, and possibly conservative/sanitised representation of English history. What is your view on this?

r. Some researchers think that many visitors to the country house feel the act of visiting reaffirms their identity, especially a middle-class identity, or possibly an English identity. What is your view on this association? To what extent does this association factor into the choice of films for production?

s. To what extent do you feel the country house and its associated myths and history represent a national English identity?

4. Questions for Employees/Representatives/Guides of Tours/Tourist Organisations

Filming

a. How did the tour company become involved with heritage film tours and the country house site? What is was the motivation for becoming involved?

b. To what extent do you think there is financial benefit to the country house for being involved with filming? To what extent is there a financial benefit for allowing the film-based tours at their heritage site?
c. What are some of the other benefits for the country house being involved with a film or television programme? What are some of the negative consequences?
d. How do you, as a tour operator, make a decision about which films and country houses to highlight in specialised tours?
e. To what extent do you think the type of film (heritage or contemporary etc.) influences the expectation of the country house by visitors?
f. To what extent do you think country houses are portrayed accurately and realistically on film?

Visitor Experience

g. To what extent does being involved with a film/TV programme impact visitor numbers at the country house site?
h. What is the popularity like of the film-based heritage tours?
i. To what extent do you think being involved with a film/programme impacts the visitor experience? (How does it impact the visitor experience?)
j. To what extent have you seen a country house being involved with a film/programme impact the signage and informational guides and tours available to visitors?
k. To what extent do see house managers/owners focus exhibitions on appearances in film? Is it highlighted or avoided?

l. To what extent do you think people visit country houses due to appearance in films?

m. How do you think tourist expectations of a visit to country houses change after appearance in a well-known film?

n. How do you coordinate with country houses to allow film-related tours? To what extent do you run into helpfulness or negativity from owners/managers when promoting film-based tours?

o. What type of client is usually interested in the film-related heritage tours?

Marketing/Branding

p. How do you make use of the country house in your marketing and branding materials?

q. What percentages of your participants are interested/take the heritage film country house-related tours? What are common attributes and attitudes of these tourists?

r. In my thesis, I argue there is a 'country house myth' or 'narrative' that encompasses certain attributes associated with the English country house, developed through novels, adaptations, films and television programmes. To what extent do you think this 'narrative' plays in your branding/marketing strategies and the narrative of the tour?

Cultural Impacts

s. A lot of viewers/visitors make connections between heritage/period films/TV programmes and the country houses of England, wherein the lines between history and the narrative are blurred. What is your view on this?

t. Some critics posit the English country house presents a traditional, and possibly conservative/sanitised representation of English history. What is your view on this?

u. Some researchers think that many visitors to the country house feel the act of visiting reaffirms their identity, especially a middle-class identity, or possibly an English identity. What is your view on this association?

v. I am hoping to make some connections between English national identity and the English country house. To what extent do you feel the country house and its associated myths and history represent an English national identity?

w. In your opinion, what is the overwhelming attraction for visitors to take film-related tours, specifically to country house sites?

5. Questions for All Tourism Professionals

The English Country House and National Identity/Class

a. How do you feel the English country house is related to national identity?

b. How does the global reach of the screen country house influence the country house myth?

c. How is the country house myth a part of the understood identity of the English?

d. What does the country house, specifically in film, represent to you?

e. How is class an integral part of the country house, and the country house on screen?

APPENDIX 3: REVISED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The questions were asked of the final interviewee, Nick Way, and illustrate how the questions iteratively developed through the fieldwork process.

1. Please could you tell me about what you are doing now, and about your experience with the Historic Houses Association?

General Impact

2. In what ways have you been involved with the filming of movies or television programmes (or other productions) at heritage/country house sites?
3. What are some of the other benefits (outside financial benefits) for houses from being involved with the production of film or television programmes? Are there negative consequences? Do you have any examples?
4. What is your opinion on houses/heritage sites actively promoting themselves to cinema and television? What are the best ways of doing this?

Imagery and Representation

5. How do you view 'branding' in relation to houses/heritage sites?
6. To what extent do you think country houses/heritage sites are portrayed 'accurately' and/or 'realistically' on screen?
7. Would you recommend guidelines for scripts or media material at heritage sites? Should the potential impacts narrative or storyline on the 'brand' of the house taken into consideration? Would certain scripts be unacceptable?

8. Have you had any negative experiences with the representation of any heritage sites on screen?
9. Do you think the public perception of country houses and heritage sites are influenced by the representations on screen?
10. Is it important for country houses/castles to 'own' their representations, even when they are crafted by someone else, and incorporate them into their brand and narrative? Do owners ever feel as though they lose 'control' or 'ownership' of their houses by opening to the public or allowing them on screen?

Visitor Experience

11. To what extent do you think people visit country house/heritage sites due to their appearance in films and television? Do you think screen representations influence visitors' expectations of a visit?
12. Did you work with houses to incorporate film/television representations into their visitor experiences or interpretation? What are your views on exhibitions, movie maps and advertising based on screen representations?
13. Do you think the film representations become part of the history of the house? Become part of the Narrative?

Communication/Marketing/Social Media

14. Where do you think film and television fit into a branding strategy?
15. How would you recommend, or did the HHA recommend, promoting sites to tourists after the filming as ended? What are your views on this?

Theoretical Questions

16. Some have suggested audiences may blur the line between history and the historical country house and the country house narrative/fiction. What is your view/experience with this phenomenon?

APPENDIX 4: EXAMPLE TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH NEIL COLE, GENERAL MANAGER, OSTERLEY PARK

HS: Hannah Shimko NC: Neil Cole

HS Can you start by telling me a bit about yourself and your experience?

NC But I mean, yes, I mean, you know, in the nicest possible way, looking after these properties is a business and, you know, they have to generate revenue, you know, they don't always, you know… Osterley doesn't turn over, if you like, a profit. But they are a business and there are business needs and if you look at it like a business, then put the other components all together.

So, yes, I mean, I got a good grounding and a good knowledge of what I was doing at English Heritage and then they restructured and restructured and are restructuring again. So, I took redundancy and then that's what brought me to National Trust.

But I think having had that background of how to do things, and that, if you like, you know, a good eight, nine years at EH to then come here where you have… In the Trust, you have a lot more autonomy, you have a lot more, you know… The properties really are the GM properties, you work within a… So when I was saying I was with Christine, you work within a consultancy. So you have your core property team and then you have a consultancy around you, so you will have a buildings consultant and a lead CM and men, to obviously feed into. But then the fundamentals are you'll have a property business plan that will go for like three to five years, ideally being ten. And where the direction of the property, what you're working on in the property, whether it's projects or, you know, kind of key areas that you want to improve in and such like that, all feeds in.

So, in truth, if you have a good property business plan written you should be able to pick it up, read it and go, right, over the next three years I know where Osterley is going. I know what projects Osterley's got, I know the direction of the property, I've got the GM vision within that, and I know exactly where it's going to go.

We're not in that position. A lot of it is in stages, but, you know, I've been here three years now, so I mean it's taken me quite a long time to kind of understand where, how and who and what.

HS I can imagine it's quite a big national machine and working with bits and you have to get used to each. Yes.

NC Yes. Definitely and you kind of come in and a really good example is, you know, you do Fifty Things, you know. Have you heard of the National Trust Fifty Things Campaign?

HS Yes.

NC So, it's a national campaign, we have an umbrella that we work under, so every property will do Fifty Things, but then how you take that property and what you choose to do is of a result of that Fifty Things. That's where the property then has that autonomy, so, right, this is what we're going to do.

HS That's very nice, actually.

NC Yes, because you have a framework to work within. It's like projects, you have a framework to work within and, you know, you as a property, you would then make it come good. So yes, I mean, like I said, a lot of autonomy at local level.

HS That's great. Probably more rewarding for people working there to have a say in what's happening versus just being told to do…

NC Yes. When I was at EH it was very dictatorial so it's very much top down and…

HS I've heard this.

NC Yes. I mean it is, and look, good luck to them. But coming into the Trust, which is why I came from EH to the Trust, because I think, you know, you have that top down in EH. But whereas the Trust actually you, you know, you don't call the shots, that's saying it wrong, but you have that autonomy to make those decisions. So, you know, sport is a very good one here, we're doing loads of sport. We've got a sports development officer.

HS Yes, I saw nets up and stuff. Okay, yes.

NC Yes, and that's very much, you know, in line with what I'm saying will increase property participation, engagement. I think it's a really good way for us to engage with our local audience. Like, 80, 90% local audience coming in, feeling that this isn't a local authority park, this is National Trust. So, we've got all the sports, we've got the volleyball, the goal posts, the table tennis. We do parkrun every Saturday, we've got…

HS Oh, that's really nice.

NC We've got 10K on this Saturday coming up.

HS Gosh! Busy!

NC Yes. We've got canoeing every Sunday afternoon on the lake, so, you know, if you…

HS On the one in front?

NC Yes, on the lakes, yes.

HS That is so nice. Yes, I'll definitely be back, I hadn't been before but… It's absolutely beautiful.

NC It's amazing, yes. And that's all from the point of view that we know we have an audience that will come to Osterley, walk their dog, run through the park, cycle through the park. And what we've done is we've kind of tried to reach out to them now. Some are really kind of acknowledging that we're doing this.

Actually, we're going to give a… So we've got three main sports, running, cycling and water sports. We're going to give you a bit of structure around it. We know that that audience now participating with us are now trickling through into, like, our commercial areas. They're going into the house, they're going into the gardens and all of a sudden, you know, they are growing our numbers, and they are growing, our reputation is growing as a result of it.

HS Sounds great.

NC Brilliant, yes, it's really, really positive.

HS And like a different take then would be a traditional kind of, like, you know, you would be taught, you know, all about heritage and how to present heritage, it's…

NC Yes. It's a different way to engage.

HS It's really, yes, refreshing.

NC So the harsh reality of it is your average person will only visit a mansion house once a year. But what you can do is, you know, by engaging with them you might bring them through the house twice a year. But they will go into the gardens, we do all our events beyond our pay barrier. We've got this community now, so there's this really nice story I got to hear, where somebody says, you know, I kind of used to come to Osterley but not really that much. You started parkrun, I come every Saturday. And then when, obviously, when they have friends and families down, they then bring

them to Osterley and go, this is on our doorstep, this is our local NT property. And then that's the point where they'll then do the full visit, like, trip to the house, trip around the gardens, trip to the café, etc. But you've kept them on board because they are coming every week as your parkrunners, so…

HS Yes, very smart.

NC Yes, it's good.

HS And do you compare then with the other parts of the country, is there…?

NC Yes, I mean there's only twelve sports development offices. They're funded by, they're 50% funded by Sport England. So for us, as well, it's really a good platform for Sport England. And I think, you know, I think eleven out of the twelve have been quite a bit successful. And we are the only one in London with an SDO which, yes, I'm really proud we went for. But also in terms of what we've been able to offer, it's brilliant.

HS And the space, it's amazing to really…

NC It's a greenspace. If you go back…

HS I couldn't believe when I stepped through the gate, I saw cows and…

NC Yes, it's amazing, because they're right down by the gate.

HS And you're right by the M4 and I drive it all the time and I just didn't know it was quite so close to everything. It's amazing.

NC We're ten miles from Hyde Park Corner, so as the crow flies…

HS That's crazy.

NC So, yes, it's good. There we go, a bit of background. So, fire away.

HS Yes. I came around to the interaction between a real country house and it's representation on the screen. And obviously a lot of critical stuff has been written about heritage films and what they mean, but I'm looking more at the actual physical impact of two things. Some people disagree, if there's a confusion between the fictional narratives and the real narrative, and the country house site and the country house on screen. And then also kind of how it impacts the visitor experience, and expressions of heritage and… I had a long chat with Tony Berry and he told me all about the things the National Trust is trying to do in relation to film which was a good a way to start. And then now trying to meet with general, you know, house managers about how all that actually falls into place.

NC We have Judith in the house who oversees filming, who it might be worth, you know… If you don't feel you've got as much from me as you might need, then Judith might be a point of contact for you. She's more of our person that oversees filming here, so she's more of the operational lead. There's also… Has anybody put you in contact with Lauren and Harvey?

HS Harvey, yes. So Harvey basically said that he could meet with me in the autumn after the summer.

NC Okay. That's good of him. Go Harvey!

HS Yes, so he said, yes, no problem, just he's very busy right now.

NC Okay.

HS Everyone has spoken about how great Harvey is.

NC Yes, he's amazing. Yes, and he's…

HS Both people on the film side and technical side.

NC So Harvey… Do you understand what Harvey's role is? Has anyone explained to you?

HS He's in charge of filming, is what they've been saying.

NC Yes. So, he's, if you… So, the easiest way to explain it is, if you get a film company contact your property and say, we want to come out and do a film at Osterley, we will go, that's fantastic, you need to speak to Harvey. We'll send them to Harvey, or get Harvey to contact him. Harvey will then have the discussions with them around… They will do a needs match. So if the guy says I'm looking for, like, an eighteenth-century Robert Adam House, Harvey will go, Osterley, for example, or one of another property. If the guy says I'm looking to do this but I'm looking for X, Y and Z, then Harvey will go, right, you need to go to this. So his knowledge of NT properties is brilliant. So, in one respect, we only get the enquiries that are relevant to us. We don't have every Tom, Dick and Harry come out here and suddenly go, do a recce, this isn't what we're looking for. So he kind of filters what we're doing. Off the back of that, we would then probably do the recce, so it doesn't involve Harvey or Lauren. They will send the guy out, say like, so-and-so is meeting you at ten o'clock today to do the recce. They'll come out and do that and then from there you would do the recce. They would then feed back to Harvey and say, yes, we would like to do it, can we then discuss a contract? They'll then discuss that contract and then it'll come back to property. So that is Judith who does a lot on the day for her money.

HS So basically, that means you don't have to deal with a lot of the ongoing enquiry, trying to sort that out?

NC Yes, and then in terms of the fees, then Harvey and the producer will say, right, we have so much money. Then they'll come to us and say, right, and then we'll get onto,

like, what is the impact? So, do you close for the day, what's the impact of traffic, blah, blah, blah. And there'll be a figure, so that figure might be like 5K and we'll go back and go, look, if we're going to close and this, that and the other, loss of income, reputation, etc. 5K isn't going to do it, but if they paid us seven we would consider it.

HS Okay.

NC He then goes back and does that little bit of negotiation. And then the other big thing that is a player with all filming, so BBC, for example, don't pay big bucks. But you get that recognition of the fact they filmed and they come with a certain kind of, you know, they were okay. Whereas you get feature films, where money isn't an object, but therefore they then demand the world. And, you know, we don't have like 25 members of staff here, the rest of it is volunteers. So, you know, having a big film crew recce up on-site is, like, oh my god. Music videos and goodness knows what else.

HS Yes, I was going to say the more I went into this, it's not just film, television, it's, you know, documentaries and music videos and short films and that's the whole…

NC We've got a couple of documentaries kind of out there at the moment. We've had feature films kind of, you know, interested and such like. Soyou can have a full spectrum from that. One guy, one piece to camera in a room, you know, 150 quid to, you know, shoot.

HS And you've been in some big, big films.

NC Yes, the biggest, the big, big one was the year before I joined which was *The Dark Knight Rises*, which was 2011 so…

HS Yes, I saw. Wow. That must have been quite the undertaking.

NC Yes I mean, I wasn't here, so it was October 2011. I mean since I've been here we've had little bits and bobs. We've had, like, the Ant and Dec More Since Christmas advert.

HS I didn't realise that. Okay, nice. How are Ant and Dec then?

NC They're good and then… I don't know whether you watch it, have you ever seen *Saturday Night Takeaway*?

HS Bits and bobs of it, yes.

NC So did you see the spoof that they did with David Dickenson where they flip the car?

HS No, I didn't, no. But I'll take a look at it.

NC Have a look at it. So when they… They basically had Ant and Dec, and one of them was like a chap who had this, like, really precious car and he wanted to sell it and was interested. And then the other one jumped in, took it for a test spin. But then they flipped it on the front lawn and David Dickinson, was like it's meant to be his prize asset and, ah. And yes, they did it…

HS That is such fun.

NC So, yes, if you Google Ant and Dec, Saturday Night Takeaway, David Dickenson.

HS David Dickenson, yes.

NC You'll get that. And then, yes, they came back for their Morrisons advert. And then, yes, just had little bits and bobs. *Horrible Histories*, a lot of *Horrible Histories* was filmed here.

HS Yes, I was reading that. Because that's lots of bits as well, isn't it? Small shorter segments.

NC Yes, Girls Aloud filmed their last music video, yes. That was interesting.

HS Got a bit of everything.

NC Yes, a real mixed bag, so…

HS And do you get to meet the people? That would be quite fun.

NC Yes, we may, yes.

HS Real celebrities.

NC Yes. I mean, yes, we kind of had this joke on property because it's like, yes, obviously when it's Girls Aloud, yes, you're going to say, hello. You know, not being funny, I am going to want to speak to them.

HS Yes, of course.

NC But, yes, I mean it's kind of bizarre because you don't want to make a big hoo-hah all over them. At the end of the day, they're just professional people doing it. Ant and Dec, because they had to have so much make-up done, they were here from like eight o'clock in the morning, so we kind of, yes, kind of got chatting to them. But you kind of respect, like, they're doing their filming and we're doing our bit. So, yes, I mean, I think when it was *Dark Knight Rises*, they obviously got to know some of the crew quite well, because they were here for a three-week period.

HS That's very long, yes.

NC Yes, so I think that's how they set up, well, as I said that was before my time, but you get to speak to some of them and that. You know, some of them are really friendly and they'll have a chat and, you know, they kind of say, you're working, and that must be quite interesting. But yes, otherwise, you know, you just leave them be.

HS Yes, that's kind of the start of it, is… So, as far as promotion, does it all come through Harvey then, it all comes through the National Trust as a national project?

NC Yes, so he would put together all the contracts and then from there you will, you know, there might be embargos that we're not allowed to talk about. So we've had, even filming here…

HS Yes, that was one of my questions.

NC Yes, that we… Yes, we'll have certain embargos so we'll be like, you know, we're closed for filming. We can't say, obviously… We use social media a lot on properties so, we can't be kind of saying, you know, we've got Ant and Dec. I mean, the other hand is, as well, is, you know, something like that locally, if it gets out you will end up with kids here, you will end up with people, you know, Girls Aloud…

HS Queuing up, yes.

NC Yes, wanting to see them, so, you know, you're just adding to your own issues, really.

HS Very true!

NC So, yes.

HS Very true. So, I'm not really looking at financial impact, because that's been done. But what are some of the other benefits, like this is kind of the overarching question we get into more specifically, but can always just chat about it, like the biggest positive impacts that come of having a film here?

NC So there is one or two. Financially, there's a huge benefit, I'm not going to lie to you about that. But we have a make-up of, you know, numerous budgets to make and because Osterley has a five-, ten-year solid history of having filming here, it very much goes in as an income stream. So we have a considerable amount of revenue in a budget that we should achieve year on year for filming.

HS Wow.

NC If we don't achieve that, if you then take the full bottom line of the property, if we don't fulfil that budget, it's coming off the bottom line. The flip of what it allows us to do is obviously we have budgets for income and we have budgets for expenditure. The expenditure being, you know, the conservation work that we're doing, etc, etc. So, you know, if you take a film, and I won't reveal the figure for it, but if you take a film as have *Dark Knight Rises* here for a period of time earning a set amount of money that we should, you know, a lot.

HS Yes, well. Three weeks of dealing with them.

NC Yes. Then what that allows us to do is a property will work on, you know, it's bottom line and then, in effect, banking its reserves, so same as your bank account, you know, at the end of every month, you know, profit or loss. If we have surplus then it goes into a rainy-day savings account. And that is how a property will work. The more reserves you have built up then you can do more conservation work. The more conservation work that you can do you're then looking after the property. That feeds into a plan. So over the next five years, if you're building up your reserves, you can allocate certain things to be done on a property. So financially it does actually have a huge impact.

Reputationally, it's good exposure. You know, this number of films that feature Osterley featured there, obviously the most recent one being *Dark Knight Rises*. People recognise the staircase, recognise the portico steps, etc, etc. And that's one of the things that we are. So, if you take something like, you know, a big commercial film versus an Ant and Dec, then how many people watch *Saturday Night Takeaway*

that saw Osterley. We were able on the day to kind of go, you know, watch *Saturday Night Takeaway*, it features Osterley. You know, you're getting exposure out there and, you know, goodness knows how many people watch that programme, but really, really good exposure. Put two and two together.

HS Absolutely.

NC That's perfect for us. So again, it just kind of raises awareness to what Osterley is.

HS Yes, no absolutely. And, this is going off my script, but what then really interests me is the difference between being in a heritage film, which kind of places the country house, you know, as itself, playing itself in a time period. Or not playing itself, as in playing Osterley playing a country house, versus being a documentary or being in something like the Ant and Dec. Or being on the grounds or, like, seems to be quite different… A quite different association.

NC Since I've been here we've never had any real kind of a set period drama. It's been the…

HS Well, you had a bit of *Belle*, right?

NC Yes, we had *Belle* actually, yes, we did have *Belle*. I forgot about *Belle*. Yes we had *Belle*, what, a year and a bit ago. But again, you know, they will… It was still very much set up as a film set, it's more the backdrops. So, yes, I mean we had, yes, so that's a good reminder actually. We had one of the rooms, the drawing room they used, they moved more the furniture that was in that room so it was kind of how they wanted it. But they used very much the backdrop of that room, they used the furniture that's in the room. So yes, they're less dependent on what they need to

bring in, in terms of like, you know, setting, etc, etc. And yes, they obviously, yes, I mean they were here for, what, a week, two weeks.

So yes, I forgot about Emma Thompson, should have remembered that, so yes. So yes, they will use, I think the main thing is they will use, like, the long gallery. They would, you know, there's less…

When Ant and Dec did the *Saturday Night Takeaway*, not *Saturday Night Takeaway*, when Ant and Dec did their Morrisons advert, it was all stuff coming in, you know. Unless you, there was one scene in there, unless you knew it was Osterley, you would never have known it was Osterley. You could have… And this is the bit that's interesting, it's like, for some of them, you question why they come out and use a place such as Osterley. Because actually when you see what they filmed and what they actually show, you'd be, like, really? They surely could have done that in a studio. Whereas, yes, for *Belle*, it was more using the set that we have within the house for the reality of what they wanted it for.

HS Yes, absolutely. That's really interesting. Really interesting. And do you think that on-screen country houses are portrayed, accurately or realistically? Or do you think that sometimes their representation takes them to a place that is very different to maybe what the National Trust is trying to achieve? Or what they represent historically or in the community? It's quite an overarching question but if you've got a script, would there be scripts that Harvey would say no to, or that you would say no to here? In part because of what was in them, or whatever it might represent?

NC No. I mean the thing… So, if you take kind of Harvey's reading of this, I don't believe that Harvey actually sits and reads the script, to be honest. I'm pretty sure he

doesn't, I think it's more a question of its associations. So the safety net for us is to go through Harvey, he knows his producers, he knows his location managers. They know… So somewhere I'm sure there is guidance very much around, you know, when the National Trust is happy to have films on the property, and when the National Trust isn't happy. And obviously we have to be really careful about that. We do generally have to be careful. So representation of, like, National Trust, or say Osterley, you know, there are certain things that we just wouldn't, you know… Might be worth a certain amount of money, but we just wouldn't entertain them because it's not a good fit for National Trust.

It's a little bit like, you know, leading up to a general election. You can't, you know, no matter how good your local relationship is with your MP, you can't be seen to be putting yourself in a vulnerable position where you're almost canvassing on their behalf. And it's the same with filming in many respects, you know, there are certain things that we just would not touch. But again that's the safety net where Harvey would be able to tell you kind of what that caveat, what those caveats are.

HS Okay. Great.

NC So, yes. In terms of its… You know, how it's portrayed, I mean for *Belle*, you know, it's very much they had their script. We knew that they were using Osterley for the equivalent of what Kenwood… They couldn't use Kenwood at the time interestingly because it was wrapped in scaffolding.

HS Yes, bad time to come and film at Kenwood.

NC Yes. Because obviously, you know, *Belle* was absolutely influential at Kenwood. But because of the scaffolding they couldn't use it. So, you know, how accurate it then is

on screen, you know, that's coming down to the producer to kind of, I think, you know, kind of argue the case that it is what it is.

HS Yes, so I think some of the stuff you read by critics is about, oh, this isn't accurate or that isn't accurate, and your die-hard country house visitors… Sometimes it's interesting when you've got audiences, when a bit of work has been done, you know, they say that's not correct. But in the end, really, it's not going to have, for you or for any house, it still has more positive benefits than a few people being upset about it.

NC Yes, definitely. Don't get me wrong, can be highly controversial. You know, we're closing for filming, you know, and people come around. Especially now, like financially, you have to be very careful. So, how we work in property is if Judith is the property contact between Harvey and property, that goes through Judith. And then if Judith's got a particular issue then she would then bring it to me. And then I will have a conversation with her and say can we accommodate him, what's the impact going to be, and we'll kind of talk it through. And, you know, obviously from a GM's point of view, there is the income aspect of it, but then there's also reputation risk, you know. If we're closing every single day because of filming, no matter how good the money is, reputationally, locally, that might not be doing us any favours. Because then people will start going, I was going to go to Osterley for a day but actually there's no point because they'll have filming, so everything will be closed. So there is that reputation risk that you, you know, potentially is out there.

HS So you have to make a decision each time.

NC Yes, we have to weigh up the risk, weigh up the impact. And it's not just on the actual filming, it's in terms of like car parking, you know, the one thing that, you know…

HS Because do you have to have the…?

NC The unit base, yes.

HS And that's not a small…

NC No, they're not. And, you know, trust me, even for like a one-day film set, there are, you know, their site base can be fricking huge.

HS And you have to coordinate with all that on top of closing…

NC Yes, or accommodating it while you're open. So, I mean, yes, so for *Belle*, you know, great, you know, we kind of get good meals out of it, don't get me wrong there, you know, they will cater for you. But, you know, you have a double-decker bus parked outside the house which solely did catering, you've got the make-up trailers, you've got all the other crew that come in and out. Yes, I mean it's huge.

HS A lot of conservation worries around about making sure people follow the rules and…

NC Yes, so if it's medium- to large-scale we will have an appointed conservation person on-site. So you would have Judith as the kind of operational link and then you would have a conservation curator on. So when we had *Belle* we had an assigned conservation person here every day from like eight in the morning until ten at night.

HS It's very impressive with the National Trust how coordinated it is. Because I've visited some private houses where things aren't quite as, you know, working well.

They… I was on set visiting when they were filming something for *Yesteryear*, you know, very kind of small-scale thing. But it was all a little bit more frantic.

NC Yes, I guess so. Have you been on a set where they've been doing it for National Trust property?

HS No, not for National Trust, only private so far.

NC So it may well be that, again, what we've got coming up and that, if I get in contact with Judith and then, you know, she could get you in, you could do alongside her, you know, days volunteering as well.

HS Yes, for sure, I'd love to do that.

NC Kind of get you on, see what we can get you involved in and then, you know, if you want to shadow someone like Judith she can, you know…

HS Yes, I can help out as well.

NC Yes, you'll see first-hand what she has, I mean, we've got little bits and bobs coming up. I can get you in contact with her.

HS Yes. My job was to open and close the door when the takes were going on.

NC A very important job. Very important job.

HS And then open it up because they didn't want to close the whole house, so they only closed a bit of it.

NC I mean it's… I think for us, especially with *Belle*, where, you know, sort of set dressing and this. I mean the days were slow.

HS Really. So, you almost prefer it when they're not filming and you've got…

NC Yes, I mean it's kind of a funny thing because you can get excited about who, you know, because we had Emma Thompson here for that. But yes, I mean, they're long boring days. I don't intend to sign up to help. I'll just pop over and pop back.

HS And then do you think that from your experience with the public their perception of country houses and the parks surrounding them, is influenced by what they see on screen?

NC I don't know, to be honest with you. I think it's down to the individual. I mean, I think, you know, Osterley has a good local reputation for knowing that it's in big films and I think, you know, that brings a certain amount of grandeur with it. How much it actually impacts, I don't know. You know, I think what *Dark Knight Rises* has done is, you know, where people are… We don't shy away from it, we say it was Wayne Manor. And also we did do, two years ago, we did a film exhibition here called 'Fifty Years of Film in Osterley', we did a…

HS That was my next question as well.

NC Yes, we did that. I might have some information on that, I mean, obviously, you know, the exhibition has been dismantled now, but we did do, and I can send it over to you, we've got a really, really good clip. So we basically produced a two-and-a-half-minute looped video which kind of took you through the years of Osterley, all the things, and I've got the YouTube link for it so I can send that over to you.

HS Oh, that's amazing, yes, thank you.

NC It's just a kind of demonstration to show you everything from *Green Green Grass* to *Dark Knight* to what we've had here.

HS Quite a diverse selection, really.

NC Yes. And it's got Claire, so Claire Reed was our old housing collections manager, she's subsequently moved on, but she speaks on it. Our curator, so the conservation curator speaks on it. I think Judith speaks on it. So, yes, I can send that over this afternoon.

HS That's really interesting. So you embrace the filming and don't try and separate it from the site.

NC Yes, I think for me, I think, you know, like I believe in being, you know, pretty damn transparent. And I think if people can understand, you know, it does have that impact financially, it does allow us to do more. It does mean the inconvenience sometimes that we're closed. But we shouldn't shy away from that, you know, I think too many people don't, you know… I'm not an expert in like house and collections, I'm not a garden expert, I'm not a ranger expert. My role as the GM is to pull all of those collective strands together, manage it as a business and then set out that direction and see where we can go. Filming is an invaluable part of that, so we shouldn't shy away from talking to people about it. People do like the fact that Osterley was, you know, Wayne Manor, it's got great hubris. And, you know, I've taken people around and you say to them, do you recognise these stairs here? I've never seen *Dark Knight Rises* myself, but I've seen little trailer clips so if you go on to, what's the website, is it IMDB?

HS Yes, IMDB.

NC Yes, if you go on there you'll see like the staircase and …

HS Yes, and I was taking a look to see… Because I knew some of the big ones like *Dark Knight*, but there's some, yes, from like, yes, the eighties and nineties as well, that

kind of heritage-type dramas, and yes, it's really interesting. And so do you ever have them on-site when it's not closed?

NC Yes, so we…

HS And how is that, do you have to close a part of it or…?

NC Yes, just so we've had, say, there's something coming up where they might just want an entrance hall, so we will accommodate them whilst staying open. I mean Osterley used to historically be closed on a Monday and a Tuesday. So Osterley used to be, March until October, closed on a Monday and a Tuesday, so it was five days a week, March to October. In the last twelve months we've gone from being that to open 363, so the café's now open seven days a week. From the first of January to, bar Christmas Day and Boxing Day, we are open.

HS Wow. And do you get people the whole time?

NC Yes, absolutely. And that's the same for the gardens. So that's operationally, that's more a slightly different slant to how we do things. Because, you know, predominantly you try and line stuff up for Monday and the Tuesday, then it had no impact. Now we kind of find in our feedback, can we can accommodate you whilst we're open, yes, we can, not a problem. And then you've just got the issue of vehicles and such like, but again, you know, operationally kind of, you know, it comes together, you can do it.

HS Yes, that's really impressive. Especially being, I suppose, being close to London is part of the reason that it is a popular place to film, is that…?

NC Yes, so any, so when I… I used to manage a property up in Essex near Stansted, and we used to get numerous recces that were interested in, you know, stately home,

big grounds, really interested. There's two things that go in Osterley's favour, one is the fact that we kind of accommodate. So we've got an overflow park, we've got main car park, we've got 350 acres of land.

HS So much land in London.

NC Yes, we can spill into those areas. I think the other thing as well is we are, we sit within the M25 and any film, you know… The limited distance they have to travel, and, you know, Osterley has been fortunate that it's a major player, you know. We tick a lot of the boxes of what they're looking for.

HS Absolutely. And all the film people I've spoken to say, Creative England and Film London, the closer you are to production studios and if, especially in London with…

NC It's time and money.

HS Yes, exactly. The stars can stay at nice hotels in London, they don't have to get them out there. Well, from London, the girl there said to me was Osterley and Syon House are both, I guess, in kind of in competition.

HS Yes, Syon is like two miles down the road from here. Yes, and that's private, so I don't know how they do theirs.

NC No. No one's gotten back to me from there. Well, I'll keep trying.

NC They can be a funny bunch.

HS Yes, the private houses, some are really, really happy to chat to you and some are not interested, whereas the National Trust has been great.

HS Yes, which was really, really useful. And I guess the last question on a kind of list of your experiences, besides this 'Fifty Years of Osterley', do you have anything else to promote yourself alongside filming? So I guess there's communications, social

media, can you say you're filming something here, or afterwards it was filmed here, or…?

NC So, I think we're saying in three years, so I started here in January 2012. I think we were keen to get some exhibitions year on year to come and drive that, you know, non-house visitor into the house. So put something on that would drive people into the house. So, easy one to get up and running with was Fifty Years of Filming, because, you know, to be fair, that will bring people in. People would be interested in that, so we did that. We ran that across the summer. It was about 2013 when we ran that. Social media and such like, yes, you can leak it out. Again it comes back to suit your own security. Do you want to announce on the day that you've got like, you know, Ant and Dec or Girls Aloud here, probably not a good idea. So if there's no embargos and stuff then we, will, yes, we will maybe release it very much after the event.

Or what we like to do is then find out why. So when *Saturday Night Takeaway* was filmed here, we kept it really quiet. We knew it was going to be scheduled to go out on TV but we then said, watch *Saturday Night Takeaway*, it features Osterley, blah, blah, blah. So then, you know, ITV are very good, they worked with us and said, let's go guys, let's go ahead on that show, blah, blah, blah. I think one of the…

HS There's no downside for them because it will get marketed to watch their show.

NC Yes, more people to watch it. So that was fine, and I think a couple of the people that had been involved in it actually went to the studios at night and, like, when she goes watching it as part of the show, so that was good. ITV are really good on that score.

Other stuff obviously, with *Belle*, yes, I mean, you know, we didn't make a big hoo-hah when it's been here, but, you know, when it came out we kind of went, you know, have you seen *Belle*, you know, Osterley doubled up as Kenwood. But again, you know, you kind of you can use it to your advantage. I think, you know, it just depends what's in the contract, whether there's any embargos etc., etc.

But, yes, I mean I think for us to do the 'Fifty Years of Filming' I think demonstrated to our audience how much we are using filming and Osterley's significance to the film industry. Could we make more of it going forward? Absolutely. You know, potentially, you know, the one thing that you could do, which I know our house and collections manager's keen to do is, you know, if you can hire some of the outfits that are used in films. So I know that Ellie our house and collections manager in time might be really keen to go back and see whether we can hire like some of the outfits from *Belle*. But that's the thing, you know, it's great and they have a certain audience, but do they tickle everybody's bone?

HS No, exactly.

NC You know, is it relevant? Yes, if you've got a particular audience relevant in it but, you know, there are…

HS It must be worthwhile.

NC Yes, it has to be worthwhile. I think what I liked about what we did with our film exhibition that time was we created this little DVD on it, or YouTube link which we played on a loop. And we had a lot of photos so, you know, we had some stuff that was, you know, we had some stuff that was left over from the film sets so we actually got a window frame that was put on Wayne Manor…

HS Great, yes, that's really fun.

NC And sort of ran Wayne Manor down the side of it so there's no disputing that one. We had some other bits and bobs, and we just opened up rooms and said, look, this is this room as this film set, so…

HS That's really cool.

NC Yes, it's good.

HS I can imagine that was quite a fun thing for a lot of people to see and be a part of, yes.

NC Yes, you know, it was, it brought the house… It demonstrated how we can use the house in a different way, and we don't shy away from that so…

HS Perhaps in my experience it's a bit of a different thing with the National Trust. It isn't just about presenting the house in its historical setting. So some houses are how their owners left them in the seventies and the eighties, or some perhaps… Well, and in my experience so far that is the difference between some of the National Trust properties and some other places that are trying to present a heritage historical vision versus, obviously, this is to keep the house and the grounds going for everyone.

NC Yes, so if you go to properties such as Hatchlands. Hatchlands still has, I forget the chap's name, but he… If you go to Hatchlands the, if you like, the tenant still lives there and he will have his breakfast in the dining room and then the house opens at 12 o'clock and before the house opens…

HS He has to be finished.

NC They have to, yes, he has to be finished, and they have to, like, go in and they have to take out his… But if you go around Hatchlands, his TV is sat in the room where you're walking visitors through. There's a phone in there.

HS That's a very, very different situation, yes.

NC Yes, it's sort of presented as a museum and I think we're very keen on our properties of presenting museums. It's all about, you know, the visitors attraction, you know, Tony Berry might have spoken, you know, about bringing places… Like taking down ropes, making them more accessible, you know, that's…

HS He's very enthusiastic about that.

NC Very enthusiastic about that. And that's a big, you know, that is still a set change around that. So Osterley's, the biggest difference was that Osterley was very much… It wasn't a house that was lived in predominantly, it was a party house. So Osterley…

HS Was it? Okay.

NC The story of Osterley is…

HS It's really close to London.

NC Yes. Rich bankers, they didn't live here. This wasn't their true home. They might have been here for set periods of time. But it's very much, it was a house for entertaining, it was very much built as a house for entertaining. Its collections are very much grandeur to show that obviously they had links into the Bank of England, you know, and the Charles Jersey family.

HS Yes, I was reading about that.

NC And therefore we are not a stately home as a stately home. You know, Osterley is very much designed to be that and we're trying to move away from about palace of palaces, it was very much a party house.

HS Interesting.

NC Built for entertaining, built for wealth, built for growth, built for grandeur, and that's how they wanted it represented.

HS Oh right.

NC So yes.

HS Yes, I found that a lot actually, more, not all country houses are just country houses. There's a whole lot of different… Kenwood is the same, it wasn't meant as a country house, it was, like, a little retreat from the city but not a big country pile.

NC Yes, exactly.

HS Yes, it's very interesting. And do you do anything, for visitors, if they're interested? Do your guides get questions about films or…?

NC Yes, so yes, there's, you know, every room guide will have a kind of, you know, package dominantly on the history of the house and family.

HS Yes, of course, most people would probably want that.

NC Yes, I mean the thing, you know, again a number of our volunteers… So we have film volunteers as well, so they will get involved. Obviously again you need numbers, so they will, you know, you will ask them if there's some film come up, would they be interested. We are trying to recruit a bigger volunteer team and I think it's again, it's a question of, you know, they are familiar with what's been filmed here. They can talk about it, again if we get people, you know, interested, such as yourself, more

specifically interested, we can make time to speak to you. But, yes, they're more familiar with what's been filmed and, you know, the impact it has. And some of them have been involved in it, so again, it kind of filters through.

HS Well, that's great. Yes, it's really, you are very transparent, which I haven't encountered everywhere. But when this is finished, I'll have a copy of it and you can see some things, some comparisons and ways of going about it.

NC The thing is it kind of depends, because again, you know, it's we are, well, I do think we're relatively transparent here.

HS Well, talking to you I'm quite impressed by how transparent it really is.

NC Yes, it is a question of making it fair. And the thing is for me, you know, it's not open and closed, but if you're going to accommodate filming whilst you're open then look, you know, you're keeping both sides happy, so to speak. And we do have a slightly different lie of the land here because we are open 363…

HS That's impressive.

NC And the gardens and the café, and that's very much a National Trust you know, that properties are being, you know, very much… Every property should be 363 now. You know, you can't buy National Trust membership for nine months a year, which if you go back, that's what it was. You're buying a year's membership but nine times out of ten for, like, three months you couldn't visit properties.

HS Most places, yes.

NC And I think, you know, with regards to film, if you can't make it work, you know, you have to try and accommodate it. So, yes.

HS Very interesting. Does it ever play into things that are sold in the gift shop, or anything like that?

NC No, I mean there's… And that's where, you know, you, yes, but, you know, *Dark Knight Rises*, could you then film in the UK and it's a whole new world of like National Trust of retail and retail lines, etc., etc.

HS And that's, I guess, that's centrally done? Okay.

NC Yes, centrally done. So I think, you know, it might be different, you know, again if you had a big blockbuster that's ongoing, there may well be. You know, you could argue here tentatively, you know, a lot of *Horrible Histories* were filmed here, could you sell the books here? And I don't think we've got them in our shop but that's where you get, you know, what's happening at a property. It's not fed in because the retail is more kind of centrally… There are some specifications around that and such like. So no, there's probably not the opportunities to maximise it.

But then when you get bespoke filming here and there, you could just suddenly end up with a mish-mash in the shop with like, well, what are you? I think, you know, there might be more opportunities there, but I think you'd be spending an awful lot of work over something with a probably very small return. You know, when we did our filming exhibition we tried to align some stuff to our shop for that kind of three-month period, which was fine, but it was limited. Whereas, you know, if it was longer then that may well be… But, you know, if you… Is it Quarry Bank that was in the BBC documentary?

HS Oh, the Mill, yes. So…

NC Was that Quarry Bank?

HS Yes, Tony talked about that for a long time.

NC Yes, so because that was, I mean that really raised the profile of that property.

HS Yes, I think that's why he's using it as an example.

NC Yes, and it might well be, you know, I don't know whether there are opportunities. But if you speak to them about how did they look to utilise what came off the back of that.

HS Yes, he told me a lot about it. It's really interesting, about exhibitions, but also about issues they had where, and they used the name of an overseer, but they turned him into a kind of bad guy. But then his descendants, you know, knew who he was, and they were quite upset about it and trying to deal with… Because we were talking about the crossover between real and historical in that sense and, you know, I always used to think about the real versus the fictional, it's the fiction so… And then when you get that kind of questionable…

NC Yes, so I wouldn't say we've had anything as controversial potentially what they've had there. But it would certainly be worth speaking to them about, you know, what impact there has been or how that was. Because in reality TV that would probably pose a lot more issues than what we've experienced here.

HS Yes, really interesting. Yes, exactly.

NC But yes, with *Dark Knight Rises* and that, you know, we haven't really had… Even with *Belle* it was very, very straightforward. Whereas with that, yes.

HS Yes, I guess if someone came to you wanting to make a film about Osterley, or playing itself, about parties here, or something then you'd have different…

NC Yes, and that, you know, that would need, you know, need a huge degree of research. You'd need curators really fitting into it. You have to be historically accurate. And I think the other thing as well is, if it wasn't portrayed in such a way, then it would open up questions as to, you know… Any National Trust property, in the nicest possible way, is always going to have a slight whiff of a story hovering around, you know, were these stables possibly built for Elizabeth the First, you know. There's an argument either way, but I think it's, if that's something being portrayed to the public eye, then yes, you've got to be prepared for that. So, yes.

HS Interesting. Well if that ever happens I'll have to come back here then, see how it goes. Ah, thank you so much.

APPENDIX 5: OBSERVATIONAL VISIT LOCATIONS

P=Privately owned (Private Trust, Family Home, Public School etc)
HHA=Historic Houses Association
NT=National Trust
EH=English Heritage
HRP=Historic Royal Palaces

OFFICIAL OBSERVATIONAL VISITS INCLUDING EITHER A MEETING WITH STAFF OR PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS:

Berkeley Castle – P/HHA

Whitminster House – P/HHA

Rockingham Castle – P/HHA

Osterley Park – NT

Syon House – P/HHA

Stowe House – P/School

Kenwood House – EH

Hampton Court Palace – HRP

Burghley House – P/HHA

Ham House – NT

Great Chalfield Manor – NT/HHA/P

Dover Castle – EH

Eastnor Castle – P/HHA

Petworth House – NT

Highclere Castle – P/HHA

Lacock Abbey – NT

Basildon – NT

COUNTRY HOUSE VISITS, NOT OFFICIAL FIELDWORK:

Greys Court – NT

Kenilworth – EH

Anglesey Abbey – NT

Blenheim Palace – P/HHA

West Wycombe Park – NT

Waddesdon Manor – NT

Eltham Palace – EH

Audley End – EH

Hatfield House – P/HHA

Avebury Manor, Wiltshire – NT

HERITAGE4MEDIA VISITS, DONE AS PART OF MY WORK TO SIGN UP PROPERTIES TO THE ROSTER:

Hedsor House - P

Deene Park – P/HHA

Sacrewell - P

Lulworth – P/HHA

Pylewell Park – P/HHA

Farleigh House - P

HERITAGE4MEDIA WORKING ON-SET SITES:

Berkeley Castle – P/HHA – PROGRAMMES: *Poldark*, *Galavant*

Whitminster House – P/HHA – PROGRAMMES: *The Living and the Dead*

APPENDIX 6: CHECKLIST FOR OBSERVATION VISITS

What am I looking for?

a. References to specific screen portrayals or filming at the country house
b. References to screen imagery in general, general films/programmes featuring the country house, or well-known film/TV stories (also literature so could be complicated)
c. References to the country house narrative as portrayed by film and television programmes, taking into consideration analysis of the country house on film from my literature review
d. Any interest by visitors in film references, or participation in film tours/experiences provided

Where am I looking?

a. Panels and objects in the house/on the estate
b. Guides and printed material available to visitors
c. Gift shop items
d. Visitors' interests and where in the house/estate they spend more time, and if these are film/TV-related
e. Taking guided tours and listening to the narrative of the operator

Who am I interacting with?

a. I will have already spoken with the manager, owner or other representative of the country house and interviewed him/her about experiences at the country house relating to film.
b. I will be observing the actions of visitors to the country house, specifically for film/television interest and guided tours for the content of the tour. I will be unobtrusive and quietly make notes.
c. I may speak to volunteers and staff about their experiences and awareness of screen representations, and if they incorporate it into their presentations and daily activities.

For each specific case study, I prepared a checklist, which will took into account each of the specific films for the country house, and the other ways in which that house is known to the public. This made each location different but and drew on the information in the literature review.

Aspects of the country house myth and its interpretation on film were also taken into consideration: class, landscape and continuity/tradition have all been translated onto the screen in films/programmes, and evidence of the screen myth may have been obvious.

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